Bob MARLEY

STEPHEN DAVIS

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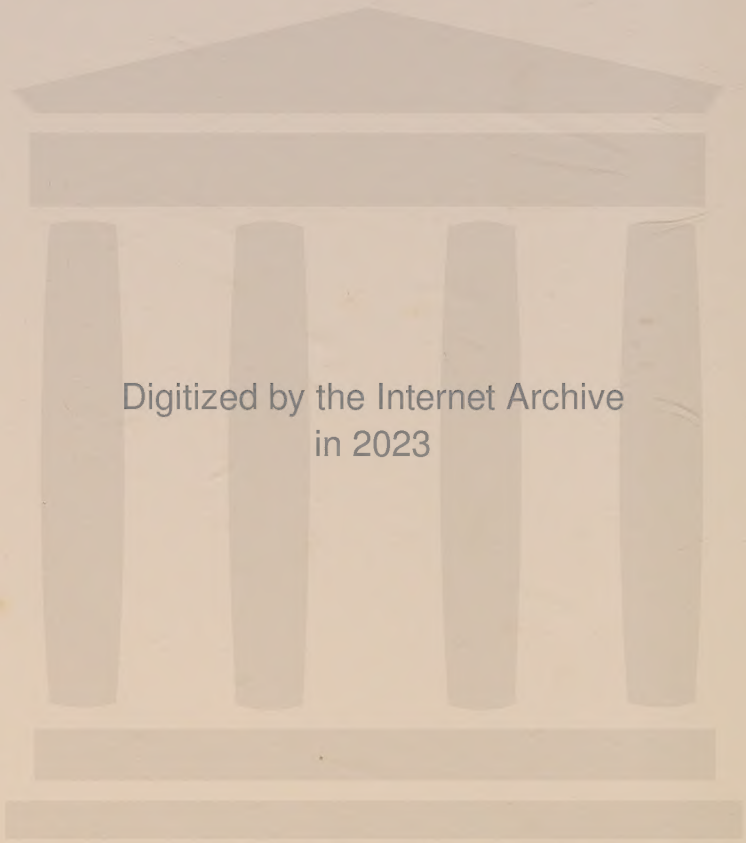

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BOB MARLEY

The Biography

Stephen Davis

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Suffering
should
be
creative
should give
birth
to something
good
and
lovely

Chinua Achebe

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a
fruitful bough by a well; whose branches
run over the wall:
The archers have sorely grieved him,
and shot at him, and hated him:
But his bow abode in strength, and the
arms of his hands were made strong
by the hands of the mighty God of
Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd,
the stone of Israel).

Genesis 49

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Jamaican English is a language that loses everything when translated to the printed page, and the problem is compounded in a biography of Bob Marley because of the way he spoke. Bob's words slurred and tumbled over into one another in defiance of conventional syntax. And his speech came in different voices, depending on who he was speaking to and how strongly he wanted to make a point. In order to write a talking biography, in which Bob tells his own story as much as possible, I use phonetic writing when working with quotes Bob gave me in recorded interviews, in an attempt to convey some of the patterns of his patois. But when employing quotes given to other writers, Bob's speech is reproduced as originally published.

S.D.
Blue Hills, Massachusetts, USA
December 1982

1 · STARTED OUT CRYING

Interviewer: Bob, how did you start out in singing?
Marley: Started out . . . crying. Yeah, started out crying yunno. (1973)

Bob Marley spent the first half of his life in Jamaica under the influence of a series of strong teachers, advisors, family and friends. The first of these was his maternal grandfather, Omeriah Malcolm, a cultivator of the hills and valleys at Eight Miles and Nine Miles near Alva in the parish of St Ann.

Omeriah was often called 'Custos' by his people, the extended family that lived in the district, with almost every soul in the little country villages related to everyone else by blood or marriage or both. Officially, of course, the title of Custos referred to the chief magistrate of the parish who presided over the parish court at St Ann's Bay, fifteen miles away on the north coast of the island. But in the speech of the Jamaican country people, 'Custos' is a man who, though short of stature, still commands enormous respect.

Omeriah was a man of property and some authority in the district, a 'big man' despite his height. He was also called O.M. and 'Manhame' and went by other nicknames as well, like many Jamaican men prominent in their communities. Omeriah Malcolm was a peasant landowner and a farmer, and his grandson Bob Marley would always tell prying interviewers that he too was just a farmer, a cultivator of the soil like his grandfather Omeriah back in St Ann.

In Jamaica, St Ann is known as 'the garden parish' and in many ways it is the spiritual centre of the nation. Located in the middle of the island's extremely fertile north-central sector, St Ann has a special cachet for Jamaicans as a place of abiding beauty, restlessness and rebellion; the area is known for the sweetness of its fruit, the abundance of its produce, the strength and head of its meticulously cultivated

sensimilia marijuana, and the special, somewhat fiery quality of its people. Every Jamaican knows St Ann as the home ground of the island's two international heroes, Marcus Garvey and his spiritual descendant, Bob Marley.

On the northern border of St Ann are the aquamarine inlets and the sandy beaches of the Caribbean. Inland, the landscape turns to rolling hills and vales of every conceivable shade of green and blue, in turn shimmering with hot tropic humidity and shaded by vast sailing ocean clouds. Turkey buzzards (called 'john crow' locally) swoop low over the little hamlets and villages that dot the winding roads, where peasants walk along in the slow, deliberate step of country people everywhere. A man's machete, carried both as agricultural implement and personal totem, might be gently slapping the side of his leg. A woman might stop a moment to adjust the heavy basket of mango and yam on her head. In St Ann, life takes on a measured, unhurried air. When waiting for something in St Ann, people tend to say 'soon come,' and sit back and hope for the best.

On the west is the more roughly-hewn parish of Trelawny, the ancestral home of the Maroon tribes, a semi-autonomous nation descending from the slaves who fought the British redcoats to a bloody draw in 1738 after a rebellion lasting nearly eighty years. South of St Ann is the parish of Clarendon, which has produced many of Jamaica's best singers, and St Catherine, the gateway to the island's broad southern plain and the capital at Kingston. To the east is St Mary, equally beautiful but lacking some of the majestic qualities of its neighbour. Among all Jamaica's thirteen parishes, St Ann alone brims with mystery and the natural glories of the world's tropical zone.

When Christopher Columbus, sailing west from Hispaniola on his second voyage to the New World, discovered Jamaica in 1496 he anchored at Dry Harbour on St Ann's northern coast. Columbus found the island populated by the Arawak Indians, with the thickest settlement in the area of St Ann itself. When the Spanish began to colonize Jamaica in 1509 (under licence from Columbus's son Diego), they established their first town, Sevilla Nueva, at St Ann's Bay and began their genocidal enslavement of the Arawak. Under the Spanish, St Ann was a rich grazing area, with gigantic herds of swine and cattle wandering over the country and great annual slaughters for the fat, the meat, and the hides. As the Arawak began to succumb to disease and mass suicide the Spanish began to import African slaves from Angola, the seed of the present Jamaican population.

By the time the English took Jamaica from the Spanish, first by

military force in 1655, and then by treaty in 1670, the island had a substantial black population. On the arrival of the British, several large parties of former slaves of the Spanish took to the Clarendon hills to fight harassing actions against the new occupiers. These mountain guerrillas were known to the Spanish as *marrano*, wild and untamed. In time, and with fresh recruits from the harsh conditions of the English sugar plantations, they came to be called the Maroons.

Under the British, Jamaica was used as a huge agricultural factory and trans-shipment port for the slave trade. Sugar from the West Indies was the great energizer of Europe in the eighteenth century, and vast fortunes were cut from the cane fields of Jamaica. To work the cane, the British stepped up the slave trade with West Africa, which resulted in one of the largest forced migrations in human history. To satisfy the European lust for sugar, millions of Africans were transported as cargo to slave in the sweltering fields of Jamaica, Cuba, Hispaniola, Barbados and the American South. Jamaica, among the most fertile of the Antilles, naturally developed one of the largest black populations.

Black slavery lasted in Jamaica until 1834. On the plantations, Africans and their descendants were developing their own culture, with half-remembered African traditions and rhythms and newly-acquired British and Caribbean influences. Wrenched from tribal custom and tradition, the slaves coped with an unfamiliar environment by creating a culture and world parallel to that of their captors. Medical care was handled by herbalists, blessings were conveyed by Myal priests, and curses were placed by obeah men. Tradition and religion were reconstructed from a combination of the King James Bible and the African stories of Ananci the spider and Jesta the trickster. Although African drumming by slaves was outlawed in Jamaica early in the 1700s, popular Jamaican music began to develop during the next century, based on the various quadrilles fashionable in planter society and the shanties brought in by sailors.

By the 1830s the agitation for the abolition of slavery in Jamaica was being carried by missionaries of the three major dissenting Protestant faiths in Jamaica – the Quakers, the Methodists, and the Baptists. In 1834, the Jamaican Emancipation Proclamation announced that all slaves were to be henceforth apprenticed to their masters, but many slaves simply refused to work under the terms of the so-called 'apprentice system'. In 1838 the slaves in Jamaica were freed unconditionally; and with no one to work the large plantations, the fabulous Jamaican sugar economy began its long decline. The sugar estate owners, desperate for labour, began to import East Indian indentured workers to replace the freed black slaves. It is these East

Indians who are generally credited with (or blamed for) the introduction of marijuana seeds to the island.

After emancipation, Baptist missionaries began to set up 'free villages' of liberated black families on 500-acre tracts in the hills of Jamaica. Some of the earliest of these were in St Ann, and it is believed that the tiny villages in which Bob Marley was raised were founded in these times by former slaves and their preachers.

Many of the 'free villages' were, and still are, almost completely self-sustaining communities of small farmers growing fruit, vegetables, root crops and herbs, raising poultry and pasturing cattle and goats. To this day it is a conceit among some educated Jamaicans that the lifestyle of the typical Jamaican peasant is among the highest forms of living in the world. But it wasn't that idyllic in post-emancipation St Ann. In 1865, with civil war raging in the United States and basic commodities (like salt cod) cut off by the Union naval blockade, starving St Ann peasants drafted a plea for help to Queen Victoria and sent it via her Jamaican governor, Edward Eyre. In reply, Jamaica received a document that came to be known as the 'Queen's Letter', recommending hard work as the solution to the problems of the labouring class, and stating that only by their own effort would they achieve some improvement in their living conditions. Subsequently a small rebellion broke out in Morant Bay, in St Thomas parish, but the leaders were caught and hanged, and the frustrations of Jamaican life were again suppressed. The people suffered in silence.

In 1887, in St Ann's Bay, a son was born to a family of black stonemasons said to be descended from the Maroons. The boy was baptised Marcus Mosiah Garvey, and he was to become one of the most powerful and most feared black men in the world.

At the age of fourteen Marcus Garvey left St Ann and went to Kingston to find work. He became a printer's apprentice; in 1907, at the age of twenty, he led a strike in Kingston, even though as a shop foreman he was technically on the management's side. Fascinated with journalism, he followed the migrations of Jamaican workers to Panama and Costa Rica and edited newspapers for Jamaican workers in those countries. He travelled next to London, where encounters with Africans led him to African history and the slumbering cause of black nationalism.

Back in Kingston by 1912, Garvey began to build a reputation as a brilliant preacher and a shrewd entrepreneur. While there he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Two years later he moved the organization to New York and started a newspaper in Harlem called the *Negro World*, which took as its motto Garvey's

nationalist rallying cry – 'One Aim, One God, One Destiny. Africa for Africans at Home and Abroad.' Garvey was a short, powerful man with penetrating eyes and a booming inspirational preacher's style; all over America he spread his doctrine among Negro peoples and encouraged intense racial pride in their common African heritage. In his uncompromising stance, rejecting integration and speaking directly to the lowest classes of blacks, Garvey was hailed as a saviour by every black community he visited.

He was convinced that black people could never secure equal rights in countries in which they were in the minority. He envisioned an autonomous black state in Africa, with its own culture and civilization, free from the domination of white men. As the first step in this dream he founded a steamship company, the Black Star Line, whose purpose was to 'link the colored peoples of the world in commercial and industrial discourse'. Purchase of Black Star Line stock was limited to blacks, and Garvey raised millions of dollars by selling single shares to his American followers. It is said by Garveyites that Marcus never intended, as his critics claimed, that the Black Star Line would eventually provide transportation back to Africa for those who wanted to go. But the publicity angle of that concept was put to profitable use by the company's fund raisers and advertising agents. The Black Star Line eventually purchased an old cotton freighter, renaming it the SS *Frederick Douglass*, and in 1920 the boat began trading between New York and Jamaica.

The same year, Garvey called a convention of the UNIA in New York. From Harlem to old Madison Square Garden thousands of Garveyites paraded in colourful uniforms. Garvey himself rode in an open limousine, wearing plumes in his commodore's hat. The main sessions at Madison Square Garden were attended by African chieftains in tribal regalia.

At the podium, the small prophet from St Ann was at his most spellbinding. Issuing an international proclamation of anticolonialism and African nationalism, Garvey thundered from the rostrum, 'We are the descendants of a suffering people. *We are the descendants of a people determined to suffer no longer.*' The pure African-ness of that statement, the sense that one's ancestors are always there to be appeased and avenged, was central to the almost hypnotic appeal Garvey had for his millions of disciples. Harlem tobacconists sold Marcus Garvey cigars with the prophet's image on the band. There was a popular race recording of a dance tune called 'Black Star Line'. Black churches rang to the ponderous strains of the UNIA anthem, 'Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers'. Still in his mid thirties, Garvey had achieved an

unparalleled level of power for a black man in America. In 1922, his organization had almost six million dues-paying members.

The following year his troubles began. The Black Star Line was forced into bankruptcy. Garvey was tried for mail fraud and tax evasion and was sent to prison in 1925. Two years later, Garvey's sentence was commuted by President Calvin Coolidge, and the prophet was deported to Panama. He made his way back to Kingston and began to preach again. He predicted full repatriation for New World black people by 1960. From the pulpit of a Kingston church one Sunday in 1927, Garvey uttered what would become, in Jamaica, his most revered prophecy: 'Look to Africa, where a black king shall be crowned. For the day of deliverance is here.'

Finally, Garvey moved to London, where he died in 1940 without ever setting foot in his beloved Africa. Fifteen years earlier, a UNIA attempt to establish a black colony in Liberia was rebuffed by the conservative black Liberian government. But in other parts of Africa during the 1920s, Garvey's message of African unity had slowly caught on. Garveyism inspired a young rebel organizer who called himself Jomo Kenyatta, and whose war cry was '*Harambee*' – roughly speaking, 'Pull Together'. Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism, Léopold Senghor's Négritude, Kenneth Kaunda's Humanism and Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa* ('Familyhood') were all descended from ideas that had been African for centuries, but which had become crystallized in the lessons of Marcus Garvey of St Ann's Bay. Forty years after Garvey's death, the nationalist and revolutionary movements he helped spawn had forced Africa, from Angola to Zimbabwe, back into the hands of Africans.

The map of St Ann is mostly white space in the middle, denoting the dense mountain jungle and steep limestone terrain of the interior of the parish. Bob Marley's country is off the narrow lane that cuts through the hills between the village of Alexandria and the market town of Claremont, twenty miles to the east. At Alexandria, you turn east toward Alva and start searching for the tiny settlements on dirt roads where Bob Marley wandered as a barefoot little boy driving his grandfather's goats before him. If you come to the village of Albion, you've gone too far. Turn back and start looking again. Most likely, anyone along the road will be happy to tell you where you want to go.

Most important, anyone who travels these roads can't help but be astounded by the irony of the place, so scenic and lush on the surface, and yet so hobbled by extremes of wealth and grinding poverty. Born into a seeming paradise, Jamaicans are among the most handsome,

most generous, hardest-working people in the world. But the beauties of their birthplace aren't sufficient to support them all. Restless, many move on, seeking fortune in the island towns and, eventually, in foreign lands.

In 1940 the world was at war for the second time in the century. Forces would be unleashed that changed the world for ever. These forces would also affect a union between a middle-aged white man and a young black woman deep in the hill country of St Ann.

Today, sitting on the patio of the suburban south Miami house that her son bought for her after her second husband died in 1977, Bob Marley's mother remembers little of World War II and the events that led her to marry her first husband, Norval Marley. Now a bright-eyed, articulate matron in her late fifties, the classic domineering Jamaican mother, Cedella Booker remembers the war in terms of the increased air traffic over St Ann that delighted and mystified all the children, and the concerned looks of her father, Omeriah Malcolm, and his brothers as they discussed the implications of the conflict.

Cedella was born on 23 July 1926 in her father's house at Nine Miles, the sixth of the nine children of Omeriah Malcolm and his wife Alberta Wilby. The family farmed O.M.'s various landholdings, the principal one being a rich valley bottom down the road at Eight Miles. O.M. was a proud farmer, and his family worked hard, spending long days in the field. Much of Cedella's youth was spent walking barefoot, a basket on her head, between her father's house and his various fields. In the evenings, after a hard day's work, there was often music. Omeriah played the violin and accordion, and one of Cedella's uncles was a semi-professional musician who played the violin, guitar and banjo with several of the St Ann quadrille bands that provided dance music for village dances, fairs and tea-meetings staged by community organizations and churches.

The quadrille styles and figures played by his relations were probably the first music Bob Marley was exposed to as a child. Quadrille (called 'katreel' in St Ann) might be termed a Jamaican variant of bluegrass; it was developed by black country ensembles in the mid nineteenth century trying to reproduce the stylish European quadrilles, Scottish reels, waltzes and polkas. The usual quadrille group has even today two guitars, a fife, and a four-stringed banjo of the type Cedella's uncle played. Sometimes a fiddle and a rhumba-box are added for special occasions. Doubtless the earliest music Bob Marley ever heard was his great-uncle's band jamming on classic quadrille tunes like 'Titanic', 'Jane and Louisa', or any of the popular 'round dances' based on native Jamaican melodies.

One can imagine a skinny, sharp-featured boy hovering around the musicians as they played for some wedding or party, closely observing the guitarists and banjo-player as they provided percussive, syncopated accompaniment for the dancers, who would accent the quadrille figures by stamping their feet in unison at certain points as a mischievous and very African fife darted round the music, providing both melody and focal point. Today the quadrille bands are dying out but during Bob's childhood they were the principal form of entertainment for country people, and the quadrille musicians, despite their legendary appetites for St Ann's powerful ganja and white rum, were accorded special status within their communities.

Cedella's mother, Alberta, was a small, beautiful woman from the village of Alva, a few miles to the west. Cedella remembers her singing in the fields. 'She sang really well, echoing across the field so that everyone who was working could hear her, in a high tone of voice. If she could tell that people were depressed because of working so hard in the sun, she'd just sing it out. Just sing it out!'

Alberta died in 1936, when Cedella was ten years old. From then on, Cedella was raised by Omeriah and her older sister Enid. Cedella's childhood routine of primary school and field work was interrupted only on Sunday, when the family walked down the road to the Shiloh Apostolic Church in Eight Miles. When she was fourteen, Cedella joined the choir and began to develop a fine voice, singing gospel for churches and at little concerts around the district. By the time she turned sixteen, in 1942, she was beginning to get restless. The rigours of rural life in Jamaica turned young people old by the time they were thirty-five. Cedella wanted something different.

Two years later, in 1944, she found it.

In that year Captain Norval Marley, a quartermaster attached to the British West Indian Regiment, took up a new post as overseer of Crown 'contingent lands' in the districts around Rhoden Hall. Norval was short, dark, handsome, and lonely. They met while the captain was making his rounds on horseback. Cedella remembers that it was the captain's gentle sense of humour that attracted her to him at first. Although Captain Marley was almost fifty and Cedella not yet eighteen, they became lovers. Norval's family were white Jamaicans from the parish of Clarendon. The Marleys were respectable, active in business and agriculture. Norval's mother, Mrs Edith Marley, resided in one of Kingston's better suburbs, near Hope Road in lower St Andrew parish. According to residents who still remember her, Edith Marley's two sons, Robert and Norval, were her complete pride and joy.

Cedella Booker doesn't know many details of Norval Marley's life.

She believes he was born in Clarendon before the turn of the century, and went to live with his mother in Kingston when his parents divorced. Like many white Jamaicans of the middle and upper classes, Norval might have received some of his education in England. Cedella is not sure. 'Bob's father's early life, I don't know anything too much about,' she says after straining to recall some point. 'At the time we were together, I didn't have the experience to ask these things of him.'

Cedella does remember that in spite of the considerable difference in age their love affair was a passionate one. 'He was a very handsome, loving and sweet gentleman. He told me he loved me, and I believe that he did. He was always honest with me in that time. He told me he was the black sheep of his family, because the Marleys did not like black people, but Norval liked them very much.' For a while, the romance between the pretty black teenager and the ageing army captain went unnoticed but for the usual rumours that affect country life everywhere. When Cedella discovered she was pregnant, in May 1944, she was both afraid and proud.

Cedella told Norval that she was expecting his baby, and he said he would marry her and support the child. Flushed with her secret, Cedella returned to Nine Miles and blurted the news out to her most trusted sister, and began to make secret preparations for her wedding. But within twenty-four hours, sister had whispered to brothers who whispered to cousins who whispered to their mothers, Omeriah's sisters, and Omeriah got wind of what was going on with his little Ciddy and erupted with the fury of a sudden St Ann thunderstorm.

Terrified of her father's wrath, Cedella ran away from home before O.M. could lay a hand on her. She got as far as her grandfather Daniel Wilby's house in Alva before O.M. caught up with her and took her home to Nine Miles to find out exactly what was going on. Her father told Cedella that Captain Marley was even older than the fifty years he claimed, and to think carefully about what she was doing.

Somehow Cedella got word of the crisis to Norval, who rode out to Nine Miles on his horse to ask Omeriah for Cedella. 'That man came right to my father's house and asked my father for me,' Cedella says. 'And my father told him right out that I was too young. My father said to the captain, "She may be your girl, sah, but she's still under my protection." I can remember this like yesterday. They were two big men arguing with each other, and I was a little girl.' To add to the tension, the whole village and tribal family was in an uproar of gossip and malicious innuendo, of which Cedella had to bear the brunt. 'But I outgrew that yunno,' Cedella says bluntly. 'Because I'm strong anyhow. And if someone's sayin' something I don't like, I tell them to

stop. When they teased me about the captain in those days, I just told them to *stop*.'

After a few hours of polite but tough-minded negotiation, the two men agreed on the marriage of Cedella Malcolm to Norval Marley. The wedding was set for June, and a parson was engaged. It is doubtful a marriage licence was ever taken out for an informal marriage of convenience and necessity.

A week or so before the wedding, Norval visited Cedella at her grandmother's house to give her some unhappy news. He told her that an old illness had come back to haunt him. His job in St Ann required horseback inspection of government properties, and all the hours of riding on mountain trails and rough roads had aggravated a chronic hernia. On a visit to Kingston he had been to see a doctor who had told him either to seek an operation to cure the hernia or to find a job that didn't require long hours in the saddle. Norval had applied for and been ordered to a new assignment near Kingston as a foreman on bridge construction projects. But he promised to visit Cedella every week in St Ann, and to support the baby when it arrived.

Cedella Booker heaves a long sigh, a world away from her other life in Jamaica, and conjures up her wedding night. 'We got married on a Friday night, 9 June 1944, at my grandmother's house. Parson Aljoe, the minister for Stepney Church, was hired and came to the house. That was a Friday. Norval married me because I was pregnant then, and he was leaving to go away. By marrying me in our house he let me know that he would take care of us. We married Friday, and he left Saturday evening, the next night, for Kingston to take his new job.'

As the seasons changed, Cedella continued to work on her family's ground. Her belly swelled, and she waddled with all the pomp and pride of a typical young Jamaican mother. She watched her diet and prayed. She lived with her father, her grandmother Yaya, and sometimes in a house in a neighbouring vale called Calderwood. Here her problems with her husband's family had their genesis.

It turned out that a white Jamaican woman named Mrs Morris also lived in Calderwood. Mrs Morris was a friend of Norval's mother in Kingston. Mrs Morris heard that Cedella was going around claiming that Captain Marley had married her and was the father of her baby, and went and relayed that information to Edith Marley, who had a fit.

Norval visited Cedella twice during her pregnancy, and told her disheartening stories about his family's reaction to the marriage when he had finally admitted it to his furious mother.

'Ysee,' says Cedella, 'here's what happened to my life with Captain Marley. I was a little black girl then, and still is today, and the prejudice

in those days was so strong. Captain Marley visited me while I was pregnant, and he said his mother was very wroth with him because he had married a little black girl in the country. The next time he visit, before Bob was born, he told me that Mis' Edith disinherit him in favour of his brother Robert's two sons, Peter and Alan. It turned out not only that she didn't give Norval a thing because he had married me, but also she treated him very bad too. His whole family was very against him because of me.'

Cedella felt bad about the familial pressure on her husband, and didn't know what to do. When she asked Omeriah about the situation, O.M. told her not to worry or cry, and everything was going to be all right. At night, lying by herself now in Omeriah's house, waiting for the baby to come, Cedella prayed and prayed, hoping for a son.

Cedella had been baptised into the Church while she was expecting her child, and she remembers no fear or apprehension of the birth. On a Tuesday night in February, she began to go into labour. Cedella's son was born at two-thirty on Wednesday morning, 6 February 1945, at his grandfather Omeriah's house at the bottom of the hill at Nine Miles. Cedella was attended by her sisters, and a local midwife was on alert in case of any problem, but the delivery was smooth and everyone in the Malcolm family was thrilled with Omeriah's first grandson, a light-complexioned child who was happy and smiling from the moment he entered the world. Taking the baby, swaddled in a blanket, Omeriah reverently weighed the child on a produce scale and shouted the precious weight for all to hear: 'Six and a half pound!' Cedella remembers that Omeriah was 'great and proud' of the baby boy, who from that moment on Omeriah considered his heir.

The Malcolms didn't name the baby, but waited for the boy's father to return from Kingston. Shortly after word reached him that his wife had delivered a son, Norval Marley came back to St Ann for a week. He named the boy Nesta Robert Marley. The name Robert was chosen in honour of Norval's brother, and the name Nesta was carefully spelled out for Cedella by Captain Marley without any explanation as to why it had been chosen. To this day the name remains something of a mystery to the Marley's.

To the family, baby Nesta was a radiant coffee-coloured child with curious black eyes who charmed everyone. The Malcolms were terrified by an incident that occurred when the baby was four months old. Cedella was patching her brother Gibson's trousers and had propped Nesta up on pillows, lying on a rubber sheet. When the child dozed off, Cedella went to the grocery shop to get a bite to eat. When she returned she woke the baby and began to breast-feed him. Suddenly, Nesta

seemed to convulse. Water dribbled out of his nose and he threw up. The baby was hot and his stomach felt as hard as a rock. Terrified, Cedella called for her sister Enid, and as the two women worried over the child, Nesta lost consciousness. His head went slack in Cedella's arms, and his eyes rolled up in his head. As her sister began to panic, Enid ran down to summon their father.

Omeriah Malcolm was an herbalist and root gatherer, and when he arrived at his house he kept a cool head as he examined the baby, still unconscious but at least breathing regularly. After due consideration, O.M. told Cedella that an evil spirit had attached itself to Nesta's body. Then he went out to his kitchen and mixed a drink from the herbs and other medicinal ingredients kept on hand. He poured a bit down the child's throat. After a while, the baby threw up again, and then the fever dropped. In a day or two, he recovered completely.

Cedella recalls another mysterious incident about that time. Baby Nesta was especially cherished by his grandmother, Yaya, who made an amulet to protect him. Cedella says that one day, while she was bathing and changing him, the amulet somehow disappeared. The whole family searched the house in vain. The amulet was never seen again.

'After Bob was born,' Cedella says, 'his father came and visited him and supported the child. He send supportance. I was so young then, just a child in the country without much sense. My husband would send the money to my father and my father would give it to me accordin' to how I'm in need of it. That's how immature I was then.'

Every month or so, when he could get away, Norval Marley came up to St Ann to visit Cedella. He gave Omeriah the money to build a tiny cabin for Cedella and the baby, and eventually set Cedella up in a little grocery shop of her own. But under pressure from Marley's family, especially his mother, the romance between the white army captain and the black country girl cooled off. As Nesta grew into a bright little boy, his father's visits became more infrequent and more single-minded. Norval Marley wanted the child.

'Now at one point,' Cedella remembers, 'my husband came and visited me. He told me very seriously that his nephew want Bob to adopt, to be his little boy. And I seh no. My husband told me if they take the child, you'll not know him as your son again. I said no no no no no, that could *never* be. They couldn't tek my child and I nuh see him.

'Then he went to my daddy with the argument, and my daddy called me in, and he said, "Never you ever let him tek that child from you." I said no papa, I could never do that. We done that argument. We didn't talk about it no more. My husband left and he went right back to

Kingston.'

As Bob was growing up, his mother moved around the villages a bit. 'After I moved from Calderwood, I live in Stepney on a little parochial road, not a road where car can run, just foot-walkin' and bicycles. Bob start going to school there when he was four. It was called Stepney School. That's where we're all schooled, to the little that we know. The school was up at the top of the hill in Stepney, and I have a little grocery shop down at the bottom.' When it was too hot the classes were held outdoors, and Bob, with his shiny high voice, would lead the class in reciting their numbers and letters. 'I'd stay down there watching him, and my head was *this* big. I felt so proud. And then his teacher, Mrs Isaacs, praised him so much. She always used to tell us how bright he was and how helpful he was to her.'

There are people in Nine Miles and Stepney today, many of course with blood ties to Bob Marley, who remember him fondly from the days when he was a 'pickney' in their villages, singing behind the counter of Auntie Ciddy's grocery. He was responsible for a few of his grandfather's prized goats, and he would tend the mango-walk in season and perform dozens of farm chores, scampering barefoot between school and the fields.

In 1951, when Bob was almost six years old, Norval Marley again appeared in St Ann. 'Bob's father wrote to me and said he wanted to school him in Kingston. He called him Nesta. Okay, so he come up and we talk it over with my father, all of us, and we talk it over with Bob. Him father seh, "I think the school in Kingston could be better for the child, that he would get better teaching and everything." So I told Bob's father that, yes, it would be all right for Bob to go to Kingston with him and get his schooling.'

Mrs Isaacs was against the move. Nesta was her brightest star, and she told Cedella she was afraid that the boy would not be able to compete with the children in the Kingston schools. But the decision had been made, and the family prepared the little boy as best as they could and sent him off to Kingston to live with his father. Without her son, Cedella was disconsolate. 'I would write to him all the time, because I could not go to see him, because of Norval's family. I was not accepted. I was rejected. So I just stayed on the outskirts and kept on writing.'

For several months, Norval put Cedella off by writing her that Bob was in school and doing well. After six months, Cedella wrote to Norval and told him she was coming to Kingston, that she had to see her son. Norval wrote back that Nesta was in St Thomas parish on a vacation with his teacher, so there was no point in coming all the way to

Kingston. 'All this wasn't true,' Cedella says now. 'But I stayed in St Ann and waited patiently, and prayed for my little boy.'

After a year passed with no word from Norval, Cedella began to despair. Her letters went unanswered and she was afraid to go to Kingston and demand her child back from her husband's family. 'One day, a lady came to the shop in St Ann where I was. Her name was Maggie James. And Maggie James said, "Auntie Ciddy, I just went to Kingston and guess me who I saw?"

'I said, "Nesta?"

'And she said, "I saw Nesta!"

'I said, "Where you saw him?"

'And she said, "I was walking on Spanish Town Road and I heard somebody call Hi! Miss Maggie! And when I look around it was Nesta, the likkle bwai who everybody used to love so much in the country down there. And I said, What are you doing here? He had a bag in his hand and he said he was going to the coalyard to buy coal for Mrs Grey."

'And then she ask him, "Who is Mrs Grey?" And Nesta said, "She's the lady that I stay with." And then he said, "Where is me mother?"

'And she said, "She's at home."

'And he said, "Ask her why she don't come look for me. Tell her I'm at so-an-so Heywood Street and tell her she must come look for me here." So Maggie James run with the tiding to me that morning. She told me the whole story, but then she said, "One thing, Auntie Ciddy. I don't remember the number."

'I said, "What?"

'She said, "Yes, Nesta gave me the address but I did not write it down. But I know he said Heywood Street." She told me her niece Merle was with her that day, and that I should write to Merle to see if she remember the address. The girl wrote back right away and said she did not remember the number but that Heywood Street was very short, and to come to Kingston and she would help with an inquiry.'

Cedella caught a ride on a farm truck as far as Claremont, and from there she took the omnibus over the Blue Mountains to Kingston, where the buses from the country disgorge their passengers and their invariable loads of produce and chickens along the south side of the Parade, the great rectangular common that was the centre of eighteenth-century Kingston. Next to the bus terminal is Coronation Market, where hundreds of 'higgler' women control the market for produce and foodstuffs. Every day is market day, and when Cedella's bus let her off at the Parade that afternoon early in 1952, she was at first bewildered by the teeming, vivacious, dangerous vibration of the island's capital.

Merle, Maggie James's niece, was waiting for the bus, and together the two women began to scout Heywood Street, just off the West Parade. The first person Cedella saw was a man sitting in a doorway of a house on the left-hand side of the street.

'I said good evening. And he said good evening. And I said, "Do you know a little boy around here by the name of Marley?"

'And he said, "Who, Robert?" And he look in the dooryard behind him and said, "He was just here a while ago, playing." And then, suddenly, running from around the corner, was Robert! And when he saw me he ran up and hugged me like this, so hard! And he looked at me and laughed. And he said, "Oh mama, you're so fat!" Because I was a little heavy at that time. I looked him up and down, and he was fat himself like I had never seen him before, but other than that he look fine.

'And I just freeze. I just stayed there on the street and felt him and looked at him, not even thinking about the home where he's living or why he's there. And then afterward he said, "Come let me introduce you to Mrs Grey."

'I was a little curious, and I said, "Who is Mrs Grey?" And he said, "The old lady that I'm staying with." And I said all right, and I went inside. He took me up the step and we went around the back and I went inside and saw her sitting there, an elderly woman half in the dark. I said good afternoon. She was heavy-set and looked sick to me. She didn't look right to me. I didn't know why Bob's father had kept the child with her. And I said to her, "I am Robert's mother."

'She said, "Are you?" And she told me that she was a friend of the Marley family, and that Bob's father had brought the boy to her in hopes that she would raise him as her son and heir. Bob's father believed that if Mrs Grey adopted Bob, what she had would come down to Bob when she died. Norval did this, I believe, because he did not have anything himself to give to Bob. Mrs Grey said that after the father brought the boy down to her, she never saw Mr Marley again.

'And she was talking quite shaky. And all her hands were broken out in sores and her skin was peeling, and her hair was hanging in strands and falling out. She asked me why I had never come to see Robert and I told her I didn't have the slightest idea where he was. The boy just saw somebody, and I got the message, and that's why I'm here!'

Cedella told the old woman that she would take her son home, and Mrs Grey said she would miss Bob, but she was ill and it was becoming more difficult to send him to school anyway. 'Bob would fetch her coal and her groceries,' Cedella says. 'He was very handy to Mrs Grey, and the two of them helped each other. You could see she was helping him

from her heart. But he told us right away he wanted to go home. At that point, I took him home. He was seven years old.'

At first, Nesta had some problems upon his return to St Ann, although everyone was happy to see him. 'All the other children wanted him to play with,' Cedella says, 'especially the ones older than him. He would be comin' out of school or mindin' the shop and the children would be calling "*Nesta! Nesta!* Come and play." Every second he and his friends would be playing football, like kicking an orange peel or whatever they had around the place.'

At first he had trouble in readjusting to the regimen of Mrs Isaacs' classroom. Then some sort of contagion hit the hill villages, and the children began to lose weight mysteriously. 'Nesta became very, very thin,' Cedella recalls, 'and we couldn't understand why. The teacher said to me one morning, "Mrs Marley, I can't understand why the child is so thin. Because he was so fat when he was living in Kingston with a stranger, and now he comes back to you and gets so thin. Isn't he eating?" '

Mrs Isaacs arranged for Cedella to buy fresh cow's milk from Mr Jones, the head teacher at Stepney School. Put on a diet of hot milk and starchy food like roast yam, the boy gradually grew stronger. But not all the children were so lucky. Before the illness passed, one of Bob's cousins developed serious bone problems.

Nesta had also changed in another way. Before he had been taken to Kingston, he used to read palms at his mother's shop. Cedella remembers that 'the district constable came to the shop one day. He said, "Auntie Ciddy, your little boy here read my hand. Listen to me. I don't know if the child realize what he was saying, but everything he told me has happened."

'The following day, a lady called Aunt Zen came and told me, "Did you know that your son can read hands?"

'I said, "Read what kind of hand? A man the other day told me the same thing."

'She said, "No Auntie Ciddy, it's true. Nesta read my hand and everything he told me is the same thing what happen."

'So I said to him, "Nes', you reading hand?" And he just smile.'

After Bob came back from Kingston, he refused to read palms any more. Aunt Zen complained to Cedella that the boy had refused to look at her hand and had told her that from then on, he was working only on singing. He sang for Cedella's customers in the shop, and after a while, he was singing so well that local people would come to the shop and give him money to sing for them. There was a popular mento song, a

Jamaican cousin of calypso, that Nesta sang all the time in the shop and which his family particularly associates with his boyhood. Bob would perform it while banging two sticks for percussion, and the people in Stepney thought it was hilarious: '*Please mister woncha touch my tomato/ Touch me yam me punkin potato/All you do is feel up, feel up/Ain't you tired of squeeze up squeeze up.*' 'Touch My Tomato' is a classic Jamaican vendors' song; Cedella says it was the first song she ever heard her son sing.

In 1955, when he was ten years old, Bob Marley lost his father, whom he had never really known. Norval died in Kingston (Cedella thinks that either cancer or malaria carried him off), leaving only a daughter, Constance Marley, by a second marriage. Cedella and Bob never had any contact with the Marley family after Norval's death. Diane Jobson, who later became Bob Marley's lawyer, grew up with Norval's nephews, Peter and Alan. One is a lawyer in Kingston, the other owns a concrete plant. They have a sister, Marguerite. Diane ran into Peter Marley at the airport once, after Bob had achieved stardom. Peter told her that he would very much like to meet Bob, but didn't know how he would be received. The two cousins never met, though Bob did meet his half-sister, Constance.

Nesta also lost his mother again that year, at least for a while. Deprived conditions in the country, life without electricity or running water, and the long hours of field work reminded young Jamaicans too much of the conditions of slavery. Cedella wanted out. 'Oh, I just had to get out of the country. Every young girl in St Ann want to come out of the country and yunno, shake up demself a little bit. So I want to go to Kingston and try also.' An opportunity presented itself that spring when the wife of Cedella's older brother Jonathan emigrated to England to study to be a nurse. Jonathan wrote to Cedella and asked her to come to the city to keep house for him. Cedella left Nesta in Omeriah's care and took the bus to town. Nesta became his grandfather's main goatherd, taking the flocks up to pasture in the morning and back down again at night. All day at pasture Nesta would sing to himself or play a cane fife he had got from a friend. His cousin Sledger, a little older than him, was his constant companion.

Nesta and Sledger were soon sent fourteen miles down the road to live with Cedella's older sister Amy in the village of Alderton. Amy was known to be strict and the family thought she might be able to control the two mischievous boys. But Amy's tyranny and child abuse was too much for them. Nesta, then about eleven years old, had to do much of the cooking, while Sledger was responsible for the animals and other chores. One of Nesta's regular duties was to walk through five miles of

craggy hill terrain to fetch firewood from a hamlet called Pedro.

One Sunday morning, Amy and her husband walked off to church after Amy had ordered Nesta to prepare a big pot of rice for their Sunday dinner. The boys gathered wood, built a fire, and put on the pot of rice to boil. While they were waiting for the water to heat up, they decided to run away back to their grandfather's house. So they ate half the rice and left, taking the rest of the meal with them. When Auntie Amy returned from church to find nephews, lunch and cookpot missing, she was properly enraged; but Omeriah Malcolm granted his truant grandsons a merciful sanctuary from the wrath of his daughter.

In the meantime Cedella was trying to scratch out an existence in the slums of western Kingston. 'So, things and time change. I left St Ann, and it was months between, maybe years, since I last seen Nesta. I don't know. I can't quite recollect. I'd say it was two years at the most.' Cedella wanted to send for her son, but she was still dependent on the charity of her relatives, and only wanted the boy to live with her when she had a proper place of her own. At first she lived on Waltham Park Road, and then moved to Bedford Street with her Aunt Ivy, who had a big apartment and wanted help with the rent. 'At that point,' Cedella says, 'I sent for Bob, because I finally had a place where he could stay with me.' It was 1957.

At first, Omeriah put up a fight. He didn't want to lose his favourite grandson and valued goatherd. But O.M. knew he had to relent. So, dressed into his best clothes and loaded down with fresh fruit for his mother, Nesta was put on a bus to Kingston early one morning. It was a typically overcrowded country bus, spewing clouds of sooty exhaust as it wheezed up the steep inclines of St Ann before joining the main cross-island road at Moneague. The bus headed south, passing over Mount Diablo and stopping at places like Ewarton, Bog Walk, Linstead, and the flat bridge at Raby's Corner, where the Rio Cobre carves an imposing steep-walled canyon out of sheer limestone. The bus was delayed for a time in Spanish Town because of mechanical problems, and was an hour late when it let an excited boy out with the rest of its passengers along the bustling South Parade. His mother, who he had not seen in two years, wasn't there to meet him, and he began to panic for a moment before he heard her excited shout: '*Nesta! Nesta!*'

Bob Marley was at many times an abandoned child; and this condition was a key to his poetic sensibility. Throughout his career, from the time he began to write protest lyrics to the end, the sufferings of the poor and the oppressed were equated with the imagery of children and childhood. 'No Woman No Cry' is now sung as a lullaby by a whole

generation, all over the world. Bob always identified his audience with children. 'C'mon children' was one of his favourite exhortations to his band and to people grooving to the music. Family and friends invariably say that as the pressure of international fame and cultural power built up around him, Bob Marley was the most relaxed, the least shy and withdrawn, the most *himself* when kids were around. Diane Jobson says that most of the time, children were in the room when Bob was composing, and it was children who Bob was singing to.

In the music and lyrics that became the Wailers, one can hear the anguished crying of the orphan, the castaway. 'Started out crying,' Bob Marley later told an interviewer, who had asked him how he got started in the music business.

Bob Marley grew up angry at his father, Norval Marley, who Bob felt had mistreated him and his mother. Cedella remembers, 'One time Bob asked me, seh, "I think my father was a bad man." I said, "No, your father was a good man, a very good man. But because of society, he couldn't do better." I can see his position. The family was up against him. They took *everything* from him.'

For a moment, Cedella forgets the warm winter evening by the pool of her home in Miami, and her mind drifts back, thinking about Norval Marley. 'A beautiful man,' she says quietly, after a pause. 'A wonderful person in his way.'

His father was a memory with which Bob never came to terms, to himself or to those who asked about his family.

> 'I'm born inna Babylon. My father, a guy who got together with my mother, he's a English . . . a guy who was a captain in the army, go to war. Ya can't get no more Babylon than that! YunnowhaImean? . . . My mother's a black woman from way inna St Ann's, inna Jamaica, way inna country. Now this man's a man who came from inna England, go war. Fight inna waar. And then after that he go to Jamaica and find my mother way inna country . . .' (Interview in 1973)

> 'Born fatherless. Never know my fadda. My mother work twenty shillings a week fe keep me go to school . . . Me nuh have education. Me have inspiration! If I was educated I would be a damn fool . . .' (Interview in 1975)

> 'My fadda was a guy yunno, from England here, yunno? Him was like . . . like you can read it yunno, its one o' dem slave stories: white

guy get the black woman and breed her. He's a English guy . . . I tink. Cos me see him one time yunno. My mother? My mother African.' (Interview in 1978)

2 · ME GROW STUBBORN

Me grow stubborn yunno. Me grow without mother and father. Me nuh have no parent fe have no big influence pon me. Me just grow inna the ghetto with the youth. Stubborn, nuh obey no one; but we had qualities, and we were good to one another. (1979)

When Bob Marley joined his mother in the slums of western Kingston in 1957, the hot, crowded capital was undergoing a wrenching period of transformation and struggle. The old wood and tin service-class neighbourhoods that had grown next to the original eighteenth-century grid of Kingston laid out after the pirate metropolis, Port Royal, was devastated by earthquake, had decayed into slum housing. And attached to the slums were the numerous warrens of shanty towns and squatters' camps, densely peopled by dirt-poor refugees from the harsh realities and social changes that had torn the veil of old Jamaican country life. Kingston had become swollen with desperate and hungry people like an angry boil on the neck of the nation. It was under smokey and reeking ghetto conditions, with undernourished children, typhus, polio and the violence of caged people, that Bob Marley began to grow into a man. In Trench Town, the people were *crying*. The literal weeping and wailing of the people of the Kingston slums – 'sufferers' they were called, or 'Israelites' after the captive Old Testament tribes with whom they identified – stoked the rebellious spirit that spawned some of this century's most outlandish cultural phenomena: the Rastafarians, the Rude Boys, and reggae music. It was a spirit that possessed Bob Marley as its fiery international beacon until the last day of his life, and even after that.

Jamaica was a placid Caribbean sub-colonial backwater, living on old stories, bananas and a dying sugar industry until 1938, when a cane-cutters' campaign of strikes on the sugar estates turned bloody and the

Jamaican trade union movement was formed. Out of the two dominant unions came Jamaica's pair of political parties: the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) was founded by a revolver-toting right-wing union boss named Alexander Bustamante, and represented in general the white British and Anglo-Jamaican colonial class, the mercantile middle-class of Chinese and Lebanese businessmen and shop-keepers, and that élite segment of black Jamaica who worked for them. The People's National Party (PNP) was founded by a socialist intellectual named Norman Washington Manley, a first cousin of Alexander Bustamante. Manley's support came mainly from the great mass of peasant Jamaica, both rural and urban.

The two parties – socialist PNP and conservative JLP – and their gunmen have ruled Jamaica since the first general election was held in 1944, after years of agitation for Jamaican internal self-rule. It isn't an oversimplification to say that in Jamaica the JLP represents the haves and the PNP represents the have-nots. Throughout his life, and often despite his public statements and the fact that St Ann has long been a JLP stronghold, Bob Marley supported the general aims of the PNP – to promote equal rights and justice for the Jamaican poor.

Several factors contributed to poverty in Jamaica, and in turn fuelled the mass migration from the rural parishes to the slums of Kingston. In Jamaica, more than fifty per cent of the land is owned by less than a thousand individuals and companies. Due to a scarcity of available land for farming, few small landowners like Omeriah Malcolm could afford to buy or sharecrop enough land to support their families and dependants without some additional income or wage. Land shortage meant an ever-growing population crowded on smaller plots and holdings, with soil gradually declining in fertility. Especially after World War II, this land problem spawned a generation of young rural Jamaicans looking for work beyond the agricultural pursuits of their parents. It was this cruel black Caribbean existence – jobless in Eden – that created the stampede of aspiring Jamaicans into the western Kingston ghettos after the war years.

For country people like Cedella Booker, Kingston was the land of opportunity, where with luck one might find a respectable, non-manual job and avoid a life of humping bananas. But it was all a myth. Kingston had very little work to offer. Newcomers without jobs or family traded the boredom and displacement of country life for a violent and competitive existence in some of the worst slums in the world. But the country people who failed to find a new life in Kingston rarely returned to their home parishes. Instead they squatted in one of the shanty towns that festered in western Kingston: Trench Town, built up over a ditch

that drained the sewage of old Kingston; Dung Hill (or the Dungle), built on a municipal garbage dump; and Back O' Wall, which grew behind the wall of the public cemetery. The sufferers stayed in western Kingston and suffered, and the country people's legend of Kingston as the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow was maintained for years.

When Bob Marley came to Kingston in the late 1950s, the miseries of the squatter camps were nothing new. The Trench Town settlements had been destroyed in a 1907 earthquake and rebuilt. Back O' Wall, the most notorious ghetto, dated from around 1935. After Trench Town was devastated by a hurricane in 1951, some public housing was built, but it was like holding back a hurricane with good intentions. Once a bucolic beach and fishing village outside of town, western Kingston became a dangerous cesspool more on the order of a new-world Calcutta. As the Israelites poured in, they huddled under shanties of cardboard and newspaper, implausible yurts of fruit crates and fish barrels. People lived in oil drums and out in the open, with maybe a jagged scrap of corrugated iron propped up by a few splintered sticks to keep the fire dry and the dampness off the children. In the various camps, the sufferers lived between tin-sided alleys. Water, when it was available, was carried from stand-pipes, and cooking was done in the common tenement yards. People relieved themselves in pit latrines or in the alley. The air was thick with the smoke of cooking fires and the stink of urine. One-room shacks had nothing in them but a formica dinette, a blaring radio and three families jammed inside living on top of one another. At the city dump there was fierce competition between the vultures and the squatters for the contents of the garbage wagons as they unloaded the day's refuse. Overcrowding, disease, infant mortality and the violence of living in a human pressure-cooker were and are the facts of life in western Kingston. By day, Trench Town looks like an old bomb-site – a maze of sodden shacks, scorched earth and lush tropic shrubbery. By night, lit only by the occasional flickering oil lamp in somebody's window, Trench Town looks like a desolate war-zone of zinc, cement, and spit. And even more threatening (in the eyes of establishment Jamaicans) were the sinister encampments of Rastafarian 'cultists' along the edges of the concrete gullies that drained the mountains towering over Kingston.

In Trench Town Bob Marley found another family. The friends he made, the people he lived with, the ghetto where he grew to his manhood, would be with him throughout his life. The 'yout's', as he called them, with whom he came of age and with whom he sang raw harmony in the starving hours of his late teenage years would be Marley's cronies, henchmen and retainers until he died. Some of them,

like his friend Georgie who burned wood through the night, would become part of song lyrics and enter into the realm of legend along with Bob himself. Others, Rude Boys like Take-Life and Frowzer, lived fast and died young.

Compared to the sufferers, Bob and his mother lived in the comparative comfort of a 'government yard', one of the concrete units of public housing built in Trench Town after the 1951 hurricane. When Bob first arrived in the city, Cedella was sharing a room on Nelson Road, but after a few months they had moved to Regent Street, living together in the tiny back room of a friend's house. Then, late in 1959, Cedella's older brother Solomon Malcolm decided to emigrate to England, and offered her his prized flat in the development at 19 Second Street, warning her that it was necessary for her and Bob to move in with her furniture well before he moved out or jealous neighbours would steal the space. Since the rent was cheaper and the apartment bigger than where they were living, Cedella jumped at the chance. She worked as a housekeeper now, earning between twenty and thirty shillings a week, barely enough to pay for their rent and Bob's school uniform and books.

Most Jamaican boys end their formal education at fourteen, and Bob was no exception. Now withdrawn and indifferent in the classroom, Bob passed through the Ebenezer, Wesley and St Aloysius schools. There are dozens of present-day Kingstonians who remember him as a quiet, observant classmate who couldn't wait for the day to end so he could be free to play football, fly his kite, play marbles, run with his friends and enjoy the other misdemeanours of ghetto youths whose heroes were cricket stars, soccer players and the emerging Rude Boys, tough street anarchists born to raise hell in defiance of hard-eyed magistrates and the whipping-post.

Cedella remembers Bob as well-behaved in those days. He seemed to spend his whole life playing football with his vast corps of friends, staying out until all hours, kicking a ball even in the humid darkness of the Jamaican night. Cedella would be vexed and worried if he wasn't home by ten o'clock. When Bob was fifteen she lashed him with her belt when he ruined a hard-earned new pair of shoes playing soccer. That night Bob had come home with his pants ripped and the soles of the new shoes flapping. In a rage, Cedella chased him round the apartment and beat him until he was screaming for his Uncle Gibson, who was living with them, to save him. But Bob made it up to Cedella. When she returned home exhausted the next evening after a day scrubbing floors, Gibson's live-in girlfriend Pat took Cedella aside and showed her how Bob had spent the whole afternoon cleaning the flat and fixing a broken

kitchen table. 'The whipping was good for him,' Cedella now says succinctly, with the Solomonic wisdom of the long-suffering Jamaican mother.

Several of Bob's old ghetto friends remember an incident that took place on Second Street which left a deep impression on Bob. A welder and his girlfriend, who lived a few doors down, had a terrible argument that everyone in the neighbourhood could hear. The girl went away to cool off, and the man began to broadcast sad love songs on his phonograph at top volume. All day and into the evening the welder played tear-jerking Jim Reeves ballads as loud as the machine could blast them into the sultry air. When his girlfriend returned home late that night, the man dragged her into the street and beat her to death with a length of pipe. This murder occurred before criminal violence had become the norm in Trench Town, and everyone was profoundly shocked. Especially Bob Marley.

In those days Bob lived with and for his friends. Cedella recalls an incident which illustrates the strength of the almost tribal sense of loyalty the Trench Town boys felt for one another.

'I remember one time in Kingston, I used to work at a restaurant on Charles Street and Spanish Town Road, and one day a little boy came in and said to me, "Are you Robert's mother?"

'And I said, "Yes, what happen?" From the hurried way that he came in, I could tell something was wrong.

'And he said, "Robert get a chop."

'I said, "He what?"

'He said, "Robert get a chop in him face."

'And I said, "Where is he?"

'And then he told me, "The school." There was a school on the Spanish Town Road behind the market there, the Ebenezer School. So there was a man next door to me that have a shoe shop, and I asked him if he can watch the store for me while I ran to look for Nesta, to find out what was wrong. And when I went to the school to find him, all dem boys were in the classroom, and when they see me they look at each other and say, "Babylon," as if the police were coming yunno, or whatever. I asked the boys if they had seen Nesta and dem say no. And then afterwards I go around the back of the school and I see him, and as he saw me he dived. He have a huge plaster on his face and he dived. And he went through another place, and hide from me, and then somehow got out of the school so I could not find him.

'Bob tried to hide what happened from me. He came home late, and I saw him outside and him was hiding, yunno. I step in front of him and I said, "Nesta, what are you doing out there?"

'And he said, "Nothing."

'I said, "What chop you?"

'Him say, "The boys."

'So I said, "Why did you run from me when I tried to call you at the school?"

'He said, "Well I thought you were going to call the police on dem, and is me good friend." His face was badly cut, but he didn't want no police to come out there. The cut was deep and he have the scar to this day. But he loved his friends so much that he take up for them, so that he is not the one to make no quarrel or confusion or contention. He would do *anything* with his friends, and even when I might rough him and say, "Don't play with him," or "Don't go there with him," he'd still always – you know how boys are: he *had* to be with his friends.'

Cedella doesn't hesitate to admit that there was something strange about Bob in his childhood. She remembers him being selfish at times, but he had a reserve and a shy sensitivity that set him apart from other children. If he asked for a piece of fruit and it was offered only grudgingly, he wouldn't take it. He hid his feeling from her, and would contract his features into a hard little mask that betrayed no emotion. Like most boys he pilfered change from Cedella and, unlike most boys, confessed immediately when confronted with his furious mother's suspicions. 'I told him, Nesta, that it is just the two of us in this world, and that whatever I had was his. I told him, "Just *ask*." And from that day he did.'

What really vexed Cedella the most was her son's choice of friends. Most were older, and most were on the edge of juvenile delinquence and incipient Rude Boy-ism.

'I remember one time, I said to him, "Bob, these people, dem bwais, who are around you seem like bad boys. A man is known by the company he keeps." And he said to me, "Yes mama, they *are* bad boys. But I nuh gwan do nothing that is wrong yunno."

'I said, "I *know* you ain't gwan do nothing that is wrong, but *these people* can go do bad and because you're in their company, they might lead the police to believe you are in league with them." And Bob said, "Mama, they don't tell me what to do. Nobody can get me into any trouble. My friends, I tell *them* what to do."

There was another large family sharing the tenement yard at 19 Second Street with the Marley-Malcolms. Thaddeus Livingston, or 'Mr Taddy' as he was called, was a carpenter and craftsman whose eight children filled the yard with happy clamour and mischief. Mr Taddy's eldest son, Bunny (born Neville O'Riley Livingston on 23

April 1947), soon became Bob's brother and singing partner. After school in the evenings, the two boys tried to harmonize amid the clashing noises of the neighbourhood, beginning with familiar hymns and spirituals. The resourceful Bunny crafted a home-made instrument by stripping rubber insulation from electrical cord and using the fine copper wire for guitar strings. The sounding board was a sardine can nailed to a piece of wood, and a length of bamboo was the neck of the crude guitar. Their voices cracking and breaking as they changed from alto to tenor in pitch, Bob and Bunny in 1960 began to sing together their first hesitant melodies.

It was an auspicious era in Jamaica's turbulent history. The island's 450-year colonial status was about to come to an end. Local musicians were developing a new sound based on the confluence of mento music –the ragged Jamaican calypso – and American rhythm and blues which was pumped without mercy into the culturally vulnerable Caribbean islands by radio stations in New Orleans and Miami. The new sound was called ska, a fast shuffle close to mento and even closer to the hip-shaking back-beat of rhythm and blues. Basically a hopping dance music with accents on the second and fourth beats, the word 'ska' was originally the syllabic equivalent of this new music's after-beat, chopped on rhythm guitar or banged out on the piano.

Like most boys in Trench Town, Bob and Bunny were mesmerized by the bold American sounds they could pick up on Bunny's radio when the wind was blowing from the north. The locomotive rhythm sections and casually brilliant singers of New Orleans were particularly inspiring. In 1980 Bob recalled, 'My earliest influence in music come from Fats Domino time – Brook Benton and alla dem people. That was the music I used to listen. Plus calypso. Plus Spanish music yunno, Latin-type of thing we get on the radio. Then me listen very hard to men like Ray Charles, Curtis Mayfield, Jerry Butler, Impressions. That's what they played on the radio in Jamaica.'

As neophyte harmonizers, Bob and Bunny paid close attention to black vocal groups like the Drifters, whose 'There Goes My Baby' in 1958 and 'This Magic Moment' in 1960 were popular in Jamaica. Even more important were the Impressions, a Chicago harmony trio that grew out of the boyhood friendship of its two principal singers, Jerry Butler and Curtis Mayfield. Since the yard singing groups, which didn't require prohibitively expensive instruments, were the main form of musical expression for young Jamaicans, star harmony groups like the Impressions spawned dozens of competitive vocal trios in Jamaica. But in 1960, young Bob Marley wasn't thinking of a vocal group. Later on, he would remember being equally influenced by Elvis Presley and early

soul singers like Sam Cooke, Solomon Burke and Brook Benton. The country and western singer Jim Reeves was also appreciated by Bob.

By the time Bob was fifteen, he had just about given up on school and was concentrating mostly on singing. The slender boy who had sung 'Touch My Tomato' for his mother's customers back in St Ann gave his first proper public performance in 1959 at a talent show at Queen's Theatre. 'Me saw dem have a little ting down at Queens deh,' he said years later, 'so one night me go in and sing a tune. Me nuh remember what it was, but me win a pound. The man den tell me, me must start sing. And me *did*.'

Since Cedella had to pay for her son's schooling on a weekly basis, she would 'get hot' when she saw that Bob paid more attention to harmonizing with his friends in the evenings than to his schoolwork. One night Bob came home from singing, solemnly handed Cedella his school books and told her to find some friend who could use them, because he didn't want to go to the Ebenezer School any more. Cedella informed her son that he couldn't make a living from singing, and would have to learn a trade. She was dismayed; she knew that work for ghetto residents, even domestic work, was extremely difficult to find. Then a friend gave her the name of the foreman at a welding shop east of the Parade, and Bob was eventually apprenticed as an electrical welder to a firm near South Camp Road and Emerald Street. That welding yard would be where Bob Marley's career as a professional musician really began.

At this point Bob realized that as a singer he could go no further on his own, without someone to teach him how to hold harmony and project his voice. Working with an acetylene torch and a hot shower of sparks by day was only the means by which he survived to sing at night. And it was Trench Town that provided him with a teacher through its informal university of boarded alleys and tenement yards.

That teacher was Joe Higgs.

He was half of the famous pre-ska singing duo of Higgs and Wilson, whose first hit record – 'Manny-O' – was produced by the fledgling Kingston recording mogul, Edward Seaga, in 1960. Joe Higgs resided on Third Street, round the corner from Bob and Bunny's Second Street yard. In the cool of the evenings, Higgs' yard was the scene of constant harmonizing, group singing, community auditions, the clink of Red Stripe beer bottles and the sharp, sweet scent of ganja, Jamaica's marijuana and folk-tranquillizer. Some of the best singers in the city, like Alton Ellis and Lascelles Perkins, showed up at the Third Street house, because not only was Joe Higgs a star and a hero of the ghetto, but he was also a serious critic and an exacting singing coach. Joe Higgs

had two non-negotiable assets – perfect pitch and the ability to teach people to sing close harmony – and he shared his knowledge freely, without thought of payment or anything other than training his ghetto neighbours to be the most disciplined harmony singers in the world. Most important, as it influenced Bob Marley, was that in an era when songs of romance and lost love ruled the Jamaican soundscape, Joe Higgs was writing songs and singing about taboo subjects like smoking ganja and Rastafarians, the outcast, underground sect of sufferers that dominated a part of the spiritual life of the shanty towns. Joe Higgs, with his hard-won moral authority and his strict approach to correct harmony singing, was the perfect teacher for Bob Marley.

Bob and Bunny were both hopefully hanging on the fringes of Higgs' open-air music class when they met another youth, slightly older, who happened to have something no one else in the area possessed, save Joe Higgs – a guitar. That boy – tall, lanky, baritone, boastful, angry – was Peter McIntosh.

He was born Winston Hubert McIntosh in Grange Hill, Westmoreland, on 19 October 1944, the son of Alvera Coke and James McIntosh. Like Bob, he grew up in a farm parish rich in sugar and herbs. Like Bunny, he had made his own first guitar out of a board, a broken tin pan, and plastic strings. When his father abandoned the family, around 1960, Alvera and her son migrated to Kingston and lived first with Alvera's sister, then with her brother and his wife on West Street in Trench Town. Peter, then about seventeen, was drawn like all the other musically-inclined youths to the harmony sessions at Joe Higgs' place. 'When I first came to Trench Town,' Tosh says, 'Joe Higgs and all the other singers were singing on Third Street. One day I happened to pass by Third Street and heard them singing together, and I go over there and join them musically. It was only me who could play a guitar, me and Joe Higgs. That is where I first find Bob and Bunny, singing with Joe.'

In 1975 Bob described what happened next. 'We go out now, and me find some little youts round me a sing. Then Bunny, who was like me brother in dem times, we form a group. We go look for Peter Tosh. We see Peter 'pon the street, me never even know him fe talk to. We hear him play him guitar and sing, and we figure seh yes, him sound *strong*. So we get together and form a group plus two girls and a next little yout, name Junior Braithwaite.'

Peter Tosh remembers that after he and the other two harmonized together the first few times, the three boys were astonished by the vocal textures they could reproduce on favourite songs like Sam Cooke's 'Chain Gang' and 'Wonderful World', Ray Charles' 'Hit the Road Jack', Jerry Butler's 'He Will Break Your Heart', the Impressions'

'Gypsy Woman' and the Drifters' 'There Goes My Baby', 'This Magic Moment' and 'Some Kind of Wonderful'. Bunny's voice was high and piercing, an almost natural falsetto like the Impressions' Curtis Mayfield. Bob's tenor was smoky, like Sam Cooke or the Drifters' Ben E. King. And Tosh's deep baritone anchored the group with the commanding authority of a Jerry Butler.

'One day,' Tosh says, 'we went down to Ebenezer School and a little youth lend Bob an old guitar, and we hold on to that guitar for a good period of time until I teach Bob to play it, and show Bunny some chords. The Wailers were not a trio at the time. There were plenty of us, but it was *designed* to be a trio. We sounded so good together that people in the community always encourage us to go to the studio and record. And we Wailers sounded good because we had good teachers, Joe Higgs and Franseeco Pep [Alvin 'Seeco' Patterson]. Joe Higgs used to direct us in harmony, as an elder one in the music business. And we used to appreciate that. Yes mon!'

But Bob wanted to be more than just a member of a talented group of kids singing on Third Street. One day he sought out Joe Higgs alone and told him he wanted to sing and play the guitar, to learn the craft of musicianship. Higgs took Bob under his wing as a sort of private pupil in addition to his work with the informal group of Trench Town singers who called themselves the Teenagers – Bunny, Tosh, Junior Braithwaite, and two local girls who sang background vocals and call-response chants, Beverley Kelso and Cherry Smith. Higgs took Bob along to Higgs and Wilson shows in neighbourhoods like Water House, and taught Bob to stay on key, to accompany himself with easy guitar chords, and to write the chorus, verses and bridge for simple songs.

By 1961 Bob was beginning to write tunes. Once he was bold enough to scout the action at Beverly's, a record store owned by a young Chinese entrepreneur named Leslie Kong, who was beginning to record ska songs by Jamaican singers for local consumption. Bob asked someone behind the counter for an audition with Mr Kong, and was impolitely advised to get lost. 'Walk on bwai,' they said to him. 'Leave the place.'

It's not hard to understand why Bob Marley was chased from Leslie Kong's door. A light-skinned, sharp-featured teenager with an askew mouth and darting eyes, Bob hardly looked the part of the ska idol or love balladeer that Kong was trying to promote. And young Marley was only another face in the jostling crowd of hopefuls who continually pestered Kong and other producers, like Ken Khouri, Duke Reid and Clement Dodd, for a chance to record.

The reason the fledgling Jamaican recording industry was able to

thrive so close to the cultural imperalism of North American soul music had to do with Jamaican pride, the special requirements of the island's dancers, and the formal independence Jamaica won from Great Britain in 1962 after one of the longest colonial administrations in British history. Recording local music for local consumption had begun in the early 1950s, when a businessman named Stanley Motta had released calypso/mento songs on 78 rpm discs, but became fairly dormant during the great rhythm and blues boom which amply supplied the Jamaican sound systems with dance music (Ray Charles, James Brown, Little Richard) and love ballads (Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr, Sam Cooke). But between 1958, when Elvis Presley was drafted into the US Army and Little Richard's manic intensity faded, and 1962 and the advent of the Motown Sound and the Beatles, the steady flow of reliable American music dried up. Of course there were exceptions: the Drifters, the Impressions and Sam Cooke continued to make black pop music that was immensely popular in Jamaica. But by the early 1960s the music imported from New Orleans and Chicago could no longer keep pace with the voracious demands of the mobile sound systems, which had developed from the late 1940s into national dispensers of dance music. Merchants like Leslie Kong and sound-system hustlers like Duke Reid and Clement Dodd turned their backs on the island's colonial inferiority complex – which held that anything from England or America was vastly superior to anything from Jamaica – and began to record Jamaican music. Turning against the tide of history, these men and the musicians who played for them began to invent a new national culture for the country. The most talented men and women in Jamaica were on the scene and ready to sing for a pittance, for nothing even, just for the opportunity to stand forth, be identified as an artist, and escape the brutal anonymity of Kingstonian street life.

An accident in the South Camp Road welding yard propelled Bob further toward his destiny as a musician. Working without goggles, a tiny, jagged piece of steel caught in his left eye. Cedella remembers that when her son came back to Second Street that evening, his head was swollen and his whole body was in great pain. He was frightened for his sight and kept asking his mother to look at the eye, to see if she could see anything still in it. Bob slept all night with his head wrapped in a hot towel, paid two visits to the hospital, and came away with what may have been a scratched cornea. Bob had to wear a bandage over his eye for weeks, even when he, Bunny and Peter performed at a talent contest late in 1961 as a vocal trio calling themselves the Teenagers. Cedella thinks Bob's eye accident was the final push he needed to try to sell his

talent after his initial rebuff at Beverly's. 'Welding's not my line,' Bob told his mother. 'Singin's my line. If I was singin' and rehearsin', this wouldn't have happened.'

Soon after Bob's accident at the welding yard, another young trainee named Desmond Dekker caught a stray piece of iron in his eye and earned a couple of days off from work. Dekker had been writing songs in his spare time, and he used his sick days to audition for Leslie Kong; he immediately recorded a song called 'Honour Thy Father and Thy Mother' which became a big hit in Jamaica. Early in 1962, Desmond Dekker took Bob Marley over to Beverly's to meet Leslie Kong's newest sensation, a fourteen-year-old singer from St James parish named Jimmy Cliff. Born James Chambers in Somerton, near Montego Bay, Cliff had come to the city the year before and walked into Kong's shop. Cliff improvised a song called 'Dearest Beverly', which in classic fashion earned its composer a recording session at Federal Records, whose studio facilities Kong used. Cliff had enjoyed a pair of local hits ('Hurricane Hattie' and 'Daisy Got Me Crazy') when he met Bob and heard him sing. Bob told Jimmy about being turned down for an audition with the boss previously; Jimmy took Bob right in and introduced him to Leslie Kong.

Bob sang for Leslie Kong without accompaniment, in the middle of the shop. The youthful but shrewd producer liked what he heard, a couple of ska-vitalized spirituals and a song Bob had written with Joe Higgs' help called 'Judge Not'. Within a few days, Bob had recorded 'Judge Not' for Kong, as well as two other songs, 'Terror' and 'One Cup Of Coffee', the last similar to, but not really a cover of Brook Benton's 'Another Cup Of Coffee'. A month later Bob Marley's first record, a seven-inch single of 'Judge Not' on the Beverly label, was released in Jamaica.

Sales were negligible, radio airplay was non-existent, and the record flopped. But Bob Marley had been given his break. Later, 'Terror' and 'One Cup Of Coffee' were also released by Kong. Both songs attracted attention, but little sales. Bob's share of the total proceeds from the three songs was £20.

1962 was both encouraging and extremely difficult for Bob. At sixteen, a nervous, skinny kid outgrowing his clothes, he had made his recording début, and some kind of music career seemed possible to him, judging by the enthusiastic response he and his little group received when they sang in backyards and in talent contests. At the same time Bob's family life changed drastically. Cedella had been having an affair with Bunny's father, Mr Taddy, and their daughter, Pearl Livingston, was born early in 1962, half-sister to both Bob and

Bunny. Bob was almost seventeen by the time his sister was born, and life at 19 Second Street was suddenly different with a baby in the house. Also, tensions within the tenement complex were rubbed raw by a love-affair between Bob and a beautiful fourteen-year-old neighbour named Esther. Cedella remembers 'this little girl' living in the same yard. 'They were in love. Bob give me sign on him bed and I saw her pass [Bob's cousin] Sledger a little love-note for him. That morning, I stand on the balcony watching Bob go off to work and I saw Sledger pass the note to him. I see him take it out and start to read it and I called to him, "Give me a read nuh!" And he look up and he laughs, and he just put it in his pocket.'

The problem was the girl's older brother, who hated Bob because he was half-white. 'Her brother say to Bob, "We don't want no white man in our breed." And besides, the girl was too young. Bob had a song for her: "*When school days are over I'll come back for you*," but her family kill off the romance. Them style Bob as a white man. That made a difference in our yard, and I decided to go to America.'

When her daughter Pearl was weaned at nine months, Cedella married a steady, dependable man named Edward Booker who was already established in the small Jamaican immigrant community in Wilmington, Delaware. Towards the end of the year, Cedella managed to buy a passport for herself and Bob, and his name was changed from Nesta Robert to Robert Nesta Marley, at the suggestion of the passport clerk, who thought Nesta sounded like a girl's name and that the US immigration authorities wouldn't like it. But money problems arose and it was decided that Bob and Pearl would stay behind in Kingston until Cedella was comfortably settled in Wilmington.

Cedella and Mr Booker left Bob and Pearl with her sister Enid at the house on Second Street. That lasted until Enid decided to return to St Ann and took Pearl with her. So Pearl's father Mr Taddy took Bob in, and he lived with the Livingston tribe at 19 Second Street until a disagreement between Bob and Mr Taddy's current girlfriend put an end to domestic tranquillity. At the age of eighteen, Bob Marley found himself living right in the street, a Trench Town nomad, a frequenter of the squatters' camps and Rastafarian enclaves at Darling Street and Back O' Wall, Denham Town and the rest of western Kingston.

In early 1963 he found a place to sleep in a corner of a kitchen on First Street. The other corner was inhabited by a friend, Vincent Ford, called 'Tartar'. The two young men were literally starving; Ford (still in Trench Town and now confined to a wheelchair) remembers they were so hungry that they would sing songs to cover the heavy, uncomfortable grumblings of their stomachs.

The singing and obsessive harmonizing continued at the nightly sessions. Bob had given up the idea of a solo career and plunged into a third year of rehearsing with his friends. For hours they would experiment with old spirituals and songs like Gene Chandler's 'Duke Of Earl', 'Do You Love Me' by the Contours, and 'Playboy' by the Marvelettes. Joe Higgs remembers that Bob was interested in having a group: 'So I started to give him some technical points in sound consciousness, timing and craft, because the voice was not really all that good. He need to know craft, technique, stuff like that. Bob was the leader of the group, but the lead *singer* of the group in those days was Junior Braithwaite. We had Bunny, Peter, Beverley and Cherry in those days. That was the Wailers.

'Bob needed to know about everything, but he was quick. It was kind of difficult to get the group to be precise in their sound, and put it over in their harmony structure. Just took a couple of years to get that perfect. But person to person, they were each capable of leading at any given time . . . I wanted each person to be a leader in his own right, able to lead anyone, or to be able to wail. That is where the concept come from.'

Meanwhile, without his family and living huddled in a ghetto kitchen, Bob was learning the true meaning of Jamaican sufferer culture. It was a fiercely competitive shadow-world of high hopes and hopelessness. Whatever food was available – fish tea, roast yam or breadfruit, a plate of curried goat – was shared with the children of the yard, but inter-ghetto conflict was quick and bitter when it came. Arguments were settled out of court and the blade took the place of complaint and litigation. Yet Trench Town was a place where friendship flourished and, being of an immaterial, spiritual nature, was valued over everything else.

Bob's closest friends were Peter and Bunny, Vincent 'Tartar' Ford, and a ghetto youth called Georgie who sustained the group's spirits by burning huge bonfires throughout the night, so that a pot of cinnamon-flavoured cornmeal porridge could be quickly cooked when the brethren gathered to sing in the morning. Georgie's bonfires reached major proportions some nights, and the First Street yard was often buzzed by police choppers with searchlights when Georgie's conflagrations sent flames licking high in the air.

It was another close friend of Bob's who eventually provided the opening for the group to record. His name was Alvin Patterson, but people knew him variously as Willie, or Pep; the Wailers called him Franseeco. Fifteen years later, as the Wailers' percussionist, fans knew him as Seeco. But back in the early 1960s he was a Rastafarian hand-

drummer, like Bob a migrant from St Ann, schooled in the Afro-Jamaican *burru* style of drumming, an ancient, heart-like beat that had originally welcomed released prisoners back to Jamaican slums and villages. *Burru* had been taken over by Rastafarians in the ghetto, and Seeco lived in this tradition as well as being a professional musician, having played with Lord Flea and various mento-calypso combos. If Joe Higgs was the vocal teacher of the early Wailers, then Seeco was the group's rhythm master and spiritual mentor. Best of all, he knew a man named Clement Dodd, who was beginning to make his own recordings. One day in the summer of 1963, after an intense period of rehearsal, Seeco took the group over to Dodd's new studio on Brentwood Road for an audition. Bob Marley and the Wailers were about to begin.

3 · STUDIO ONE

Then we used to sing in the back of Trench Town and rehearse plenty until the Drifters came upon the scene, and me love group singing so me just say, well, me 'ave fe go look a group. (1975)

The year 1963 was a heady year for youth culture, and not just in Jamaica. In England, the Beatles had exploded and the Rolling Stones were simmering in small clubs, fusing hard black urban US blues with imagery of street-wise teenage lust and rebellion. In the States, Bob Dylan was riding the crest of protest music, applying angry new lyrics and a civil-rights consciousness to the old tunes and ballads of the folk-song movement. Bob Marley, Bunny Livingston and Peter Tosh may have been enchanted by the Impressions and the Drifters, but they were hearing these other impolite sounds too, and these definitely had an effect on them.

In a sense, the early Wailing Wailers were the Jamaican variant of the Rolling Stones. Like the English band, the Wailers had to claw their way from the bottom, and succeeded by taking a tough stance on tenderness and a tender stance on toughness. The Wailers' music always seemed more dangerous than the bubbly, almost carefree ska of their contemporaries. Like the Stones, the Wailers were lustful, contemptuous, insolent, *rude*.

When Joe Higgs and Seeco took the Wailers over to Clement Dodd's studio for an audition that day in the summer of 1963, Bob Marley's fate and future were sealed. In Dodd, Bob found his next mentor, someone who could teach him not just music but the music business. Joe Higgs had taught the Wailers to sing for pleasure. Clement 'Sir Coxsone' Dodd would teach them to sing for a living.

Dodd invented the Jamaican music business when he returned from a six-month labour contract, cutting sugar-cane on plantations in the

American South in the early 1950s. He brought home with him several dozen recent rhythm and blues records, hot new sounds from New Orleans and Chicago, and after a few more trips to the States had saved enough cash to set up a sound system of his own, Sir Coxsone's Downbeat, at the corner of Beeston Street and Love Lane in the heart of the Kingston slums. Since the two Jamaican radio stations – JBC (Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation) and RJR (Radio Jamaica Rediffusion) were controlled by the island's white and brown élite, very little of what the majority of Jamaican people wanted to hear went out over the air. American rhythm and blues and Jamaican mento/ska were disseminated at local community dances, with music provided by the turntables and speakers of sound-system men like Dodd and Duke Reid.

The sound systems were the soul of Jamaica twenty-five years ago. People too poor to buy records expressed themselves at sound-system dances, and naturally competition among the various 'sounds' got extremely intense. When a dazzling new rhythm and blues number arrived from New Orleans, maybe 'One Night Of Sin' by Smiley Lewis or Fats Domino wailing on 'Hey, La Bas!', the wise sound-system man scratched off the record label to prevent the singer and song from easy identification, thus maintaining an exclusive over the rival sounds. Sound-system men often retained squads of thugs to disrupt dances put on by competing sounds. In those days, if two rival systems set up within hearing distance of each other in the western Kingston ghettoes, there was sure to be a violent night of punch-ups and blood-letting in store. Duke Reid wore revolvers and bandoleers to his dances, as did almost every record-spinner with the self-imposed title of Count This or Prince That. Sir Coxsone Dodd was no exception, and gained a reputation for toughness early on. Platoon-level assaults from jealous rivals were usually beaten off at the gate, in part because one of Dodd's DJs, Prince Buster, was one of the best amateur boxers in Jamaica. One night in the early sixties however, a Coxsone dance was invaded by a large goon squad, bigger than Coxsone's defence team. Dodd's diminutive engineer, Lee Perry, was beaten up after Coxsone and his men had fled, and was rescued only after Buster intervened and knocked out most of Perry's attackers.

Eventually, the sound systems turned into the Jamaican recording industry. As the influx of good American rhythm and blues began to fail, men like Dodd turned to recording local singers to ensure their mobile discos would be able to provide hot dance music for their steady customers. The sound-system men were the pioneers of a national attitude that expressed itself in a desire to be free, and to create

a new constitution in which truth and rights, the standards by which ordinary Jamaicans judge their society, would be cherished. When men like Sir Coxsone began to produce music by Jamaicans for Jamaicans, the politics of the island could not fail to change.

The benefits of sound-system recording were felt by singers like Higgs and Wilson, Jamaican boogie artist Laurel Aitken, balladeer Owen Grey, Alton Ellis, Lascelles Perkins, and Jackie Edwards, who did a killer imitation of Nat King Cole (Jamaicans weren't the only black musicians to assume they were royalty). The traditional road to local fame led singers through amateur shows like Vere Johns' Opportunity Hour, held in ghetto theatres like the Palace, the Ambassador, or the Majestic. The records cut by these singers (and mento-calypso bands like those of Lord Fly, Count Lasher and Lord LaRue) were for consumption by the sound systems only. There was never much thought of selling them to the public, until one day a dealer persuaded Coxsone to let him press a few hundred copies of one of Coxsone's sound-system tunes. The record instantly sold out, and Coxsone immediately went full-time into the record business, closely followed by Prince Buster, Duke Reid, Edward Seaga and a young Anglo-Jamaican named Chris Blackwell, who would later go on to start Island Records.

At first, Coxsone recorded at the existing Kingston one-track studios of Federal Records. But after producing several early hits by the Maytals (then known as the Vikings) and the vocal duo Alton and Eddie, Coxsone had earned enough to build his own one-track studio on the northern edge of Trench Town, the Jamaican Recording and Publishing Company Limited at 13 Brentford Road. Better known as Studio One, Coxsone's primitive set-up quickly became the creative centre of the Jamaican recording business as well as the laboratory where Jamaican ska, rock steady and reggae music was researched and developed.

It was to Studio One that Seeco guided the so-called Wailing Rudeboys for an audition in August 1963.

The audition was very nearly a total disaster.

Perhaps it was because the six teenage singers – Bob, Peter, Bunny, Junior Braithwaite, and the two back-up singers, Beverley and Cherry – were exhausted from an anxious week of rehearsal under Joe Higgs. They had walked over to the studio from Trench Town early one Sunday afternoon, accompanied by Seeco Patterson, who had recorded for Coxsone's sound system while a member of Lord Flea's mento-jazz band. Always on the lookout for new talent, Coxsone and his engineer (and cousin) Sid Bucknor held weekly Sunday auditions outdoors

beneath the mango tree that shaded the studio. The two men were interested in discovering great voices from the country, people whose work prevented them from getting to Kingston any time other than the weekend.

The group had entered talent shows and amateur contests under various names, including the Teenagers and the Wailing Rudeboys, and Seeco had given Coxsone a huge build-up, especially concerning Bob. Coxsone had heard one of the 45s that Leslie Kong had released of Bob's, without being terribly impressed. So when Bob counted off the time and the group, backed only by Peter Tosh's percussive guitar chords, launched into an original song called 'It Hurts To Be Alone', with Junior singing lead, Coxsone didn't even look interested. The group did two more songs, impressions of Impressions-type harmonies, singing to the best of their abilities. After the last song, there was an embarrassed silence. Then Coxsone told them they had talent, suggested that they practise some more and return in three months for another audition.

As the crestfallen young musicians were about to leave, Peter Tosh, the tallest, rudest, most assertive member of the group, blurted out that the group had one more song they wanted to sing, called 'Simmer Down'. The others protested that the song was unfinished and unrehearsed, but Coxsone told them to do the number anyway. Written by Bunny, 'Simmer Down' was immediately recognized by Coxsone as a song in which young Jamaicans spoke directly to other young Jamaicans, using their own language and imagery rather than second-hand material borrowed from American soul singers. Coxsone's commercial instinct sensed a big hit, and he told the group to come back the following Thursday to record 'Simmer Down'.

Elated, the group almost ran back to Trench Town to celebrate, and to continue rehearsing. At first, Bob and Bunny were somewhat sceptical about working for Coxsone, because of the producer's reputation for dishonesty and ruthlessness. But Tosh was confident of a bright future for the group, and pressed them to work as hard as possible.

When the group returned to the Brentford Road studio that Thursday, they discovered they were to be supported by the best professional musicians in Jamaica, the Skatalites (named after the satallites then much in the news). The group had been formed by local jazz-oriented musicians, all stars in their own right, to play the joyous, quick-stepping ska dance that was taking Jamaica by storm and which, they hoped, would become a world craze. Jamaicans were just beginning to recognize the incredible vitality and potential of their culture. Add this to a sort of national hauteur, and one can see why all

the musicians working in Kingston in the early 1960s felt that fame and fortune were just around the corner. The Skatalites originally consisted of Don Drummond on trombone, Roland Alphonso and Tommy McCook on tenor saxes, Lester Sterling on alto sax, Johnny Moore and Leonard Dillon on trumpets, Jackie Mittoo on piano, Lloyd Brevette on bass, Lloyd Nibbs on drums and guitarist Jah Jerry. Also on hand at Coxsone's studio were regular Kingston session musicians who played with the Skatalites – guitarist Ernest Ranglin, trombonist Rico Rodriguez, drummer Arkland 'Drumbago' Parks and bassist Cluet Johnson. These musicians supported not only the early Wailers, but virtually all the important singers of the ska era. And something else, something socially emblematic, was also happening at Coxsone's studio when the Skatalites played in support of vocalists. The tough, volatile port of Kingston, fractional and jealous, was symbolically united when the Skatalites and other musicians, all of whom came from the eastern end of the city, played for the singers, who tended to emerge from the western part of town. The two geographic sides of Kingston's unique ghetto culture were brought together by the loping rhythm of ska.

'Simmer Down' was recorded by the Wailers in two quick takes, after rehearsing in the studio all morning. The instrumental arrangement was the work of Coxsone, reedman Roland Alphonso, with whom Coxsone had a strong friendship, and pianist Jackie Mittoo. The recording was a fast, jumping ska dominated by the horns, with Bob Marley taking the angry, rasping lead vocal. The admonitory, blaring chorus was dominated by Tosh's loud bass and the high, monotone singing of the girls, who sounded like bold Baptist choristers from some up-country church. The verses were full of folk aphorisms about nanny-goat bellies, and the chorus was built on a relentless call/response pattern: *Simmer down/Control your temper/Simmer down/The battle will get hotter/Simmer down/And you won't get no supper/Simmer down/And you bound to suffer/Simmer down/Hear what I say/Simmer down/I'm a-leaving you today . . .*' Half-way through, Roland Alphonso steps in with a growling tenor sax solo, working the tune's changes like a veteran Jamaican bebopper before the group steps back in to finish with more stark chanting. Listening to the playback, jammed into Coxsone's tiny control booth, everybody involved – Wailers, Skatalites, Coxsone and his staff – knew they had a hit.

'Simmer Down' by the Wailing Wailers on the Downbeat label was released in the last weeks of 1963, just in time to catch the Christmas market. The song went to number one on the JBC chart in January 1964 and stayed at the top for the next two months. The Wailing Wailers –the group had been renamed by Coxsone without consultation – were

instant stars.

This first record defined the way a new generation of Jamaicans talked to each other, in the same way that in England the Beatles and Rolling Stones were talking to their own generation. Young Jamaicans of the Wailers' age had been recorded before (notably Toots and the Maytals) but their sound had drawn on gospel or spiritual music and was directed at the Jamaican people in general rather than at its rebellious youth. Speaking directly to the emerging Rude Boy movement, the song proudly proclaimed total empathy with these shanty-town juvenile delinquents by playing their dance rhythms while at the same time telling them to '*simmer down, control your temper*'. Perhaps sensing the forthcoming change in the scale of violence in Jamaica, the Wailers were attempting to function as peace-makers at a time when Jamaican society seemed to be coming under increasing social pressure. Independence in 1962 had focussed attention on national problems as never before, and the whole island, with the exception of the apolitical and still underground Rastafarians, seemed split along the opposing ideological lines of the two political parties. Also, in 1963, Jamaica's perception of the Rastafarians as a strange and violent sect was partially validated when a small group of Rastas went berserk at Coral Gardens, in the hills above Montego Bay. They burned a petrol station and hacked two people to death with machetes before losing a shoot-out with a posse of police, army units and landowners who thought they were witnessing another old-fashioned Jamaican slave rebellion. The Coral Gardens Massacre, as it came to be known, shocked the whole island, especially those who knew that the majority of Rastamen were peaceful artists, craftsmen and herb farmers who wanted merely to be left alone to smoke some of the best marijuana in the world and to worship their living God, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, in some semblance of peace.

By the time 'Simmer Down' caused a sensation in Jamaica, Bob became adept at 'cotching' – moving from one roof to another every night, usually with Tartar Ford, like hundreds of other homeless ghetto people. But after 'Simmer Down' made a lot of money for Dodd and the Wailing Wailers began recording regularly at Studio One, Coxsone followed his instincts and singled out Bob for special care and attention, even allowing the young song-writer to sleep in a shed behind the studio. It wasn't much, but for Bob that room was home.

Two hits followed 'Simmer Down' in quick succession, both completely different in tone. 'It Hurts To Be Alone', written by Junior, was a slow, plaintive ballad in which his penetrating lead vocal turned an ordinary doo-wop torch-song into feelings of loss with which every

young Jamaican whose parents were working abroad or who couldn't afford the rites of courtship could identify. A spare Ernest Ranglin guitar solo, again bebop-flavoured, exactly caught the wistful, yearning spirit of the song. The next Wailing Wailers hit, 'Lonesome Feeling', written by Bob and Bunny as a follow-up to Junior's song, was popular as a dance tune with the sound systems. Bunny's lead vocal and lyrics were buried under organ vamps and hand-claps as the Skatalites smouldered behind a fevered trumpet break from Johnny 'Dizzy' Moore.

Under Coxsone's direction, the Wailers sextet evolved into a prolific recording group. 'When they first came in,' Coxsone said later, 'they were like most other groups just starting out – young, inexperienced, and willing to learn. I coached them, and gave them a lot of ideas on harmonies. I had albums from the States by all the top soul artists. Bob liked the Impressions, the Tams and the Moonglows the most.' Coxsone also described how Bob would work on his songs: 'Marley used to come in and sing a song for two or three hours. Two weeks later he'd come in and work on the same song. I worked with him and the group on their song-writing, going over punch-lines and harmonies.'

In 1964, after the initial three hit singles, the group concentrated on recording ska versions of old spirituals and duplicating the harmony sounds of their favourite soul groups. They had a minor hit with 'I'm Still Waiting', an Impressions-style ballad with Bob taking the lead vocal (imbued with classic, doo-wop rain/teardrops imagery) while the group harmonized closely behind him. Even more Impressions-like was another song by Bob called 'I Need You', a simple chant, just rhythm and piano, in which Bunny clones the falsetto skills of the Impressions' Curtis Mayfield. Bob also rewrote the Drifters' classic 'On Broadway' into a slow ska called 'Dance With Me', and followed that with 'Another Dance', a close-harmony ska with a soulful Alphonso tenor break. If the lyric was undistinguished (*You don't even know her name/ You wanna dance with her over again*), the harmonies were like a finely- cut jewel, multifaceted and shimmering. Perhaps the Wailers' greatest harmonic masterpiece of the year was a version of a big American hit from New Orleans, Aaron Neville's 'Ten Commandments Of Love'. Behind the angelic, delicate harmonies, Bob sings the song with convincing passion and sincerity, the sheer intensity of which shows the respect Marley had for the American rhythm and blues masters whose songs he had borrowed.

Somewhat less interesting are the old spirituals the Wailers recorded for Coxsone, mostly in 1964. 'I Am Going Home' is a ska version of 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot', complete with a country-church 'coming

for to carry me home' female lead vocal by Beverley Kelso, a primitive reggae-scratch guitar (possibly by Tosh) and wild calypso-like horn parts. 'Nobody Knows' was Coxsone's ska arrangement of 'Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen'; the recording swings in a great ska fashion and was a minor sound system hit. 'Wings Of A Dove', the old prisoners' lament, and 'Down By The Riverside' were cut as fairly straight-forward gospel songs, while the ancient black spiritual 'Sinner Man' has a decidedly hard rhythm and blues instrumental hook.

Bob spent most of the time at the studio, learning his guitar and playing the stacks of records that Coxsone had shipped in from the States, music by Major Lance, Lee Dorsey, and Motown acts like Marvin Gaye, Little Stevie Wonder, the Marvelettes and others. By the time he was twenty he had become an unofficial 'artists and repertoire' man at Studio One. He studied the records coming in from the States, noting which songs might be right for different singers in Coxsone's stable, and auditioning singers. One song he was obsessed with for a time was the Drifters' 'Under The Boardwalk', a sentimental ballad with a queer inside-out rhythm and a suspicion of Jamaican sensibility in the way it sounded. When not at the studio, Bob liked to hang out with friends in Trench Town, mostly at Joe Higgs' place on Third Street, or else with the Rastas down at the beach. There was always soccer, and never-ending discussions of current events in Jamaica. In 1964 there was a great deal to discuss. On the music front the good-time themes and rhythms of ska were changing into something else, a new sound based on a slightly slower, steadier beat, heavily influenced by rock and roll. This new music wasn't quite rock-steady, the next conventional step on the evolutionary ladder of Jamaican music from mento to reggae. It was unique, and uniquely identified with the social phenomenon that provided its lyrics – the Rude Boys. In 1975 Bob Marley said, 'We used to live among certain youths who had to go out and do certain things to make a living. People called them Rude Boys.' Within a year, the Wailing Wailers would become the kings of Rude Boy music.

When in 1964 Chris Blackwell's tiny London-based company, Island Records, sold six million copies throughout the world of a bouncy ska tune called 'My Boy Lollipop' by Millie Small, the Jamaican government began to take note of the music coming out of its slums. Record-producer and former anthropologist Edward Seaga had become a politician, representing some of the most dreadful ghettos, including Back O' Wall and the Dungle, in the Jamaican House of Representatives and serving as Minister of Development in the post-Independence JLP government. Seaga decided to send a show band, Byron Lee

and the Dragonaires, to the 1964 World's Fair in New York as representatives of Jamaican ska. Millie Small, Jimmy Cliff and Prince Buster went along to provide some 'native' examples of ska singing. At Coxsone's everyone was saddened and outraged. The musicians complained bitterly that the Skatalites were the best ska band in the world, and that Lee and the Dragonaires were exploiting the real inventors of the music. Everyone knew that the Wailing Wailers were the most popular group in Jamaica, and that the choice had been made on the basis of class: the conservative Jamaican government was not going to send red-eyed ganja-smoking slum-dwellers like the Skatalites and dirty Rude Boys like the Wailers to New York, no matter how popular they were, when it could send out sanitized, image-conscious showbiz pros instead.

Although the Wailers constantly complained about the poor treatment they received from Coxsone, Dodd remembers his relationship to the group as more of an 'adoption' than anything else. Not only was Bob Marley taken in off the street and given shelter and a job, but Peter Tosh recalls Dodd paying the group £15 to £20 each for every song they recorded, as well as a retainer of £3 per week, supposedly as an advance against royalties. Coxsone also bought the group its stage clothes. One ensemble worn by Bob Marley and the Wailing Rude-Boy Wailers (as they were billed at one show in 1965 at an uptown Kingston club called the Glass Bucket) consisted of collarless gold lamé Beatle jackets and black-and-white polka-dot shirts. At other times they wore tight-fitting black suits (the cuffs on Tosh's trousers rode way above his ankles), white socks and sharply pointed black shoes. Like every other musician in Jamaica, they were completely dependent on the good will of their producer; there were no contracts, royalties, residuals, or any of the other usual guarantees. The *producer* was the star and took credit for the recordings, not the musicians. Conditions at the studio were crude; Coxsone may have pioneered modern Jamaican music, but to survive in a ghetto business he had become something of a thug. He kept a revolver in the studio to intimidate the steady parade of desperate singers looking for payment. Joe Higgs was beaten by Coxsone's henchmen when he demanded a large sum that Coxsone owed him. Other singers were slapped down by Dodd, or simply told to get lost. The atmosphere was further complicated by crowds of loiterers and young singers hoping for an audition, or a chance to sing. Everyone was so hungry that during the spring mango season, recording sessions would crash to a halt when the musicians heard the ripe fruit bounce on to the tin roof.

Alton Ellis, one of the great singers of the rock-steady era, recalls how

loose things were at Studio One in those days. 'At the time, I had a group called Alton and the Flames, which gave me most of my hits. There were times when I was recording for Coxsone and none of the Flames were present at the studio. So anybody who would be there would be a Flame for the moment, like Ken Boothe, Delroy Wilson, *anybody*. If Bob Marley is doing something in the studio and there is no harmony, he come over and say, "Back up this song." We're supposed to be paid for this, but sometimes we didn't do it for the money, because in those days we were singing for recognition in the eyes of the public more than anything else.'

The earliest Wailers public performances took place at the Opportunity Hour put on at the Palace Theatre on South Camp Road by an entrepreneurial talent-scout named Vere Johns. In addition to singers, the Opportunity Hour shows featured comedians, jugglers, and 'legs' dancers like Persian the Cat. After the Wailers became famous through their recordings, they could usually be found singing at dances put on by sound systems like Downbeat or Sir George, or at music shows at the Success Club or Oddfellows Hall where fans could see all the current big acts – the Skatalites, the Wailers, the Clarendonians, the Gaylads, Alton Ellis – in a single evening.

Bob Marley was tough long before he began to work with Coxsone Dodd. In Trench Town, he was known as a musician and peace-maker, and his natural charisma kept him out of most violent situations. Like many prominent and respected singers Bob maintained close friendships with various neighbourhood gunmen and Rude Boys. In fact, many singers on the Wailers' level were forced to seek alliances with local gangsters in order to have some muscle or firepower behind them when the time came to demand money from their producers.

Clement Dodd's influence was so strong that gradually Bob, too, began to be feared for a certain ruthlessness in achieving his goals. On the street he acquired a new name, Tuff Gong, which confirmed the air of authority and Rude swagger with which he went about. And Bob's toughness wasn't always so implied.

One night in 1965 the Wailers took part in a show called Battle of the Groups, held at the Ward Theatre on the North Parade. The other groups were the Paragons, the Melodians and the Uniques, the latter a duo featuring two of the best young singers in Jamaica, Jimmy Riley and Slim Smith. The Wailers went on stage second to last and sang 'It Hurts To Be Alone' and 'Lonesome Feeling', but had a difficult time holding harmonies, which infuriated Bob because he had rehearsed the group especially hard for the show. When the Uniques came on stage last and Slim Smith blew everyone away with a version of 'Baby, I Need

Your Lovin' ', the Uniques were declared the winner of the battle. Backstage, Bob glared with rage and challenged Slim Smith to a fight. But the other Wailers dragged him off before any blows could be landed, or blades could be drawn.

The Wailers' reputation as Rude Boys came mostly because the group sang Rude Boy music on the Rudies' home ground. The Ward Theatre audience was acknowledged to be tough but it was nothing compared to some of the other places the Wailing Wailers played. The Majestic and the Ambassador (before it burned down) were Rude Boy snake pits, and at King's Theatre, a roofless open-air cinema, the crowd responded to acts that didn't sound right with a lethal barrage of broken beer bottles.

1965 saw the height of the Rude Boy movement. Late that August, downtown Kingston erupted in a race riot, with blacks against the Chinese who controlled most of the small businesses in the ghettos. When the riot was finally put down, eight had been shot, a policeman had died, and ninety were arrested and accused of burning and looting Chinese shops. In the Wailers' neighbourhood, the era of respect for 'Brother Man', the peaceful Rasta ritualist and herbsman, had passed. The term 'Rude' referred to anybody against authority, and applied equally to the anarchic and revolutionary youth of the slums, the young gunmen, gangsters and mercenaries that were pressed into goon squads by the two political parties, and the Rasta-inspired cultural Rudies like the Wailers, who rejected traditional colonial religion and morality. The major emblem of the Rudie was his ratchet, a curved German gravity knife (Okapi was a favourite brand) made for scaling fish, that could be whipped out in the time it took an upset domino game to hit the floor. The Rudies redefined Kingston street life into a phantasmagoria of insolence, mugging, trolley-hopping and purse-snatching. The Rudies operated in a haze of ganja smoke and hallucinogenic white rum, and when the pressure dropped on them the Rudies indulged in haphazard, almost slap-stick violence towards anyone who happened to be in the alley and unarmed. They were ghetto shock troops and scapegoats, whose self-made image came from the lurid American gangster films to which all true Rudies flocked with the same reverence that sends religious people to church. The Rudies loved the timeless moment in *Kiss Of Death* where Richard Widmark pushes an old woman in a wheelchair down a flight of stairs, and *laughs*. They adored the early James Bond films (the first of which, *Doctor No*, was filmed in Jamaica). Later they would revel in the brutal orgies of death depicted in Italian spaghetti westerns like *Fistful Of Dollars* and *Hang 'Em High*. After that they became infatuated with the cartoon violence of Bruce

Lee's martial arts films. The earliest Rudies all had nicknames like Richard Widmark, Bogart, Alan Ladd and Yul Brynner. Later Rudies called themselves 007, Ocean's Eleven, Clint Eastwood, Kung Fu and Death Wish.

Not all Rudies were ghetto freedom fighters. Most of them became predatory, spreading a reign of terror over the slums and squatter-camps. But both varieties of Rudie – ghetto guerrilla and urban terrorist – became the subject and *raison d'être* of the intermediate step between ska and rock steady, the Rude Boy songs.

Most of the songs about the Rude Boys by singers or groups other than the Wailers were judgmental and extremely anti-Rude. Some tunes took the form of mock trials, in which both Rude Boys and the Jamaican judiciary are severely belittled. In 'Tougher Than Tough' the Rudie states his position as a bomb-thrower and ratchet-user. He's tougher than tough, he says, and he is *free*. In 'Dreader Than Dread' he calls for anarchy and revolution and urges his brothers to '*Stand fast together and unite/And deal with one hundred or one thousand years!*'

In the Slickers' 'Johnny Too Bad' Johnny is *Walking down the road with a ratchet in his waist/Robbing and stabbing and looting and shooting*. In 'Shanty Town': *Now rude boys have a wail/Cause dem out of jail/Rude boys cannot fail/Cause dem must get bail/Dem a loot, dem a shoot, dem a wail/In shanty town*. In 'Rudy, a Message To You' the voice of the decent citizen pleads with the Rudies to '*Stop your running around/ Making trouble all over the town*'. In Prince Buster's legendary 'Judge Dread' the minimum sentence for being a Rude Boy is one hundred years. A plea of innocence is equal to contempt of court and draws another hundred years. The song shows how, for Rude Boys, Jamaican justice was perverted by blind accusation and absurdly harsh reprisal. But ambiguity and confusion over the Rudies persisted. In 'The Appeal', Prince Buster's sequel to 'Judge Dread', he sentences the Rudies to a thousand years in jail with the spoken words: '*Count how many white people are dying, How many other nations are dying, and multiply them, and that does not amount to the number of black people that are being killed by these Rude Boys.*' Judge Dread refuses their appeal.

Rude Boyism was an obsession for many Jamaican musicians between 1964 and 1967, like Bob Marley's old friend Desmond Dekker and his group the Aces, Derrick Morgan, and especially the Clarendonians. They described a harsh urban landscape in which the Rude Boys were responsible for tension, violence and anguish.

From the beginning Bob Marley and the Wailers took a different view. 'Put It On,' for instance, the best of the group's early dance hits, was a chanting ska-rock that identified the group with the Rude no-

limits spirit: *Feel dem spirit/Feel all right now/I'm gonna put it on/I'm gonna put it on/I'm gonna put it on/I'm not boasting/Feel like toasting/I rule my destiny/I rule my destiny/I rule my destiny/In the morning, in the night, anywhere, any time.* 'Let Him Go', written by Bunny, scolded and warned the Jamaican middle class on its attitude toward disadvantaged youth in a fast ska-rock arrangement with an evil-sounding harmony intro. *Rudie come from jail cos Rudie get bail/Rudie come from jail cos Rudie get bail/You shame him you say things he didn't do/You rebuke and you scorn and you make him feel blue/Let him go/Let him go/Let him go/Whhyyyoh!* Bunny sings the song with grim conviction, and the rhythm is attacked at breakneck speed without any bridge or instrumental solo, as if to emphasize that, in Rudie music, the bass and drums drive the song.

'Rude Boy', late in 1965, established the Wailers as the ultimate champions of the Rude Boys. A mysterious litany of Rude slogans and folk sayings, 'Rude Boy' was again recorded as a fast dancing ska. '*Walk the proud land with me my friend*,' Bob invited, showing the arrogant restlessness of the Rudie. *I've got to keep on movin'/I've got to keep on movin'/I've got to keep on movin'/I've got to keep on movin'/I've got to keep on movin'/Rude Boy rock/Rude boy strut/Ska quadrille/Ska quadrille.* The bridge consists of the timeless Jamaican aphorism: *Wanty wanty cyaan getty/Getty getty nuh wanty.* It's the classic plight of deprived people, lusting for what is unavailable, disdaining what's already there. 'Rude Boy' was a huge hit in Jamaica, especially at the sound systems.

'Jail House', written by Bob, was slower, sombre, even Ruder. *Jail house keeps empty/Rudie gets healthy/Baton stick get shorter/Rudie gets taller/Can't fight against the youth now/Cos it's wrong/Can't fight against the youth now/Cos they're strong/The people going wild/Dem a Rude Rude people/We're gonna rule this land.* Other significant Wailers paeans to Rudeness were 'Rule Dem Rudie' and, a year or so later, Peter Tosh's 'I'm The Toughest' and the boasting 'Stepping Razor' with its sinister imagery: *I'm a stepping razor/Don't you watch my size/I'm dangerous/If you want to live/Treat me good.*

The alienation the Wailers expressed was a logical psychological extension of the group's early songs of loss and lonesome feelings. In Trench Town depression and hopelessness turned to anger, turned neighbour against neighbour, turned a whole generation against the government. But out of this anger emerged the revolutionary creed that would in ten years' time propel Bob Marley and the Wailers into the forefront of the fight for freedom all over the world.

Although Junior Braithwaite was by far the best singer in the group, his role diminished gradually during 1965. Most of the Wailing

Wailers' love songs ('I Don't Need Your Love', 'Your Love') were bitter and didn't sell very well. The group stole innumerable riffs and hooks from American pop tunes, and so the Contours' 'Do You Love Me' became 'Play Boy' in the Wailers' version, with its title stolen from the contemporary Motown hit by the Marvelettes. Junior Walker's jerk-era 'Shotgun' became 'Ska Jerk' with an abrasive lead vocal by Bob. 'What's New Pussycat', a smash hit for Tom Jones, was covered by the Wailers as a piano ska with a sumptuous, show-band horn section. In his lead vocal, Bob takes the song seriously, and sounds much more sexy and sincere than the unctuous Jones. Bob was also a fan of the Beatles and listened carefully to all their records with a craftsmanly appreciation of song-writing genius at work. The Wailers covered 'And I Love Her' for Coxsone, and Bob helped supervise a Skatalites instrumental version of 'I Should Have Known Better', retitled on release in 1966 as 'Independent Anniversary Ska'. (The Skatalites had broken up in 1965, but the same musicians continued to back the Wailers as the Soul Brothers and later, after reedman Roland Alphonso quit the band, as the Soul Vendors.) Although few of Bob Dylan's early records reached Jamaica, Bob Marley was very attentive when one of Dylan's mid-1960s AM radio hits came beaming in from Miami. One of the most amazing Wailers cover versions was the group's take (credited to Bunny and Coxsone) of Bob Dylan's 'Like A Rolling Stone'. After a spooky blues piano intro, the Soul Brothers slip into a sinister groove that's a mixture of 1965 American folk-rock and early Jamaican rock-steady. Although the chorus is the same as Dylan's, the verse and the melody are different: '*Nobody told you he was on the street/ But that's what happens when you lie and cheat/You have no nights and you have no morning/Cos time lights come just string without warning/How does it feel/To be on your own/With no direction home/Like a complete unknown/ Like a rolling stone?*'

It's a sentiment that Bob Marley knew all too well.

Cover versions and desultory love songs aside, the Wailers' produced some beautiful songs of their own in this period, music that would endure for the band's entire career and would be recorded by the three original Wailers time and time again. The first of these was 'Love and Affection', co-written by Bob and Bunny and dating back to the early days on Second Street. Like many Wailers songs about relationships, 'Love And Affection' dealt with loss in a ska/doo-wop mode: '*It hurts to be alone/I'm a king sitting on an empty throne.*' A similar song, 'One Love', is one of the Wailers' earliest masterpieces. A fast ska version with Bob and Bunny trading leads, the song echoes Marcus Garvey's rallying cry and calls for unity among the youth: '*One love, one heart/*

Let's get together and I'll feel all right.' The group recorded a second version of the song toward the end of their tenure with Coxsone which indicated the spiritual change the group began to make as they gradually turned away from rude themes: *One Love, One Heart/Let us pray to the Lord and I will feel all right.* A Rasta-encoded Bible-oriented song, 'One Love' was further distinguished by Roland Alphonso's smouldering tenor break and the smooth vocal harmony underlay which had become a Wailers trademark.

Perhaps the most dramatic of these early masterpieces is Bunny's 'Cry To Me', with an ethereal chorus that literally *wails* empathy for a suffering people while at the same time offering the solution of meditation, repentance, and reflection: *Walk back through the heartache/Walk back through the pain/Shed those lonely tear-drops/Spend those lonely hours/Cry to me/Cry cry cry to me/ You're gonna cry cry cry to me.* For the sufferers, this kind of lyric served as psychic medicine, words as painkillers.

Naturally, the early Wailers put out several songs that might be considered novelty numbers. The impetus for many of these came from Peter Tosh, and showed how strongly the calypso/mento form influenced his early song-writing. 'Shame And Scandal' told the hilarious story of supposedly incestuous family relationships. 'Hoot Nanny Hoot' was a fast ska on which Tosh boomed out nursery-doggerel dance lyrics. In 'Maga Dog', Tosh's sulphurous anger brims over at a girlfriend who might have left him with a mild case of venereal disease: *Stay 'way from Maga dog/Maga dog tu'n round bite you.*

Later in 1965 the Wailing Wailers was reduced to its original trio of Bob, Peter, and Bunny. Junior Braithwaite left the group during the summer in order to migrate north to Chicago with his family. Not only did Braithwaite's departure change the group's sound, the name changed also to Bob Marley and the Wailers. Speaking of that time in 1974, Bob remembered: 'Junior used to sing high. It's just nowadays that I'm beginning to realize that he sounded like one of the Jackson Five. When he left we had to look for a sound that Bunny, Peter and me could manage. We go on like that until we had to leggo the two girls. Them was good in recording, but fe go pon stage and mek a mistake that doesn't record over . . . But them sisters did *great*. Could sing *high*.'

But even as the Wailing Wailers were melding into a trio format, another 'sister' came on the scene, one who was to play an elemental role in the future. Her name was Rita Anderson.

In those days the Wailers still hung out in First Street, Second Street,

and Third Street. To get to Coxsone's studios on Brentford Road, the Wailers and their friends used to walk up West Street, where Peter Tosh was then living, and then up a short cut by Calvary Cemetery and Greenwich Park Road. The path the group used ran near the back of 18 Greenwich Park Road, where Rita Anderson was living with her uncle and aunt in the section called Ghost Town. Her parents were working in Europe.

Rita Anderson used to watch the Wailers amble by, sometimes harmonizing as they went, moving with the swagger and slouch of the Rude Boys. Of course Rita knew who they were; the Wailers' non-Rude records were played on the radio and their Rudie records were staples at sound-system dances. Later she would remember: 'They sounded like angels.' When she saw them on their way to the studio, she longed to call out to them just to give her a chance, because she too could sing. Rita had a group called the Soulettes, consisting of herself, her friend Marlene (or 'Precious') and her cousin Constantine Walker, a great harmony singer known as 'Vision' or sometimes as 'Dream'. But the Wailers were too Rude for Rita to approach them like that, and they bore the reputation of being rough guys as well. Rita was a pillar of the ghetto community, a Sunday-school teacher and church singer with her own reputation to guard. So she waited until a friend, who knew the group, took her over to Coxsone's to meet them. At first they were indifferent to her, but then she reminded them that she was the little girl they used to see on their way to the studio, and they warmed up. When she told Peter she had a little group of her own, an audition was set up for the Soulettes with Coxsone, who liked what he heard and agreed to take the group on as trainees. Coxsone assigned Bob Marley to act as manager for the Soulettes, to rehearse them, groom them, and keep the men away from Rita, a beautiful, plump, bright-eyed girl of eighteen.

At first, Rita was more attracted to Peter because, she recalls, 'Bob was very strange from those times. He didn't talk much, and he didn't laugh much. He was more *observing*. Also he would lead the rehearsals, and we were very scared of him because of the discipline he would put on his rehearsals and the type of harmony that we sing. So he wasn't a favourite of ours at that time. We used to think that this man is *very* cross. Nothing but music. No girls, no anything. He was totally different.'

But after several months of arduous daily rehearsals, Bob's attitude began to soften, especially when the attraction between Rita and Peter cooled off. One day Bunny told Rita that Bob had said that he was in love with her. Rita's first reaction was shock, because Bob had been

such a strict disciplinarian with the Soulettes that he had become more of a father-figure to her than anything else. Then Bob began to write love-notes to Rita, with Bunny acting as mailman, and an unlikely affair developed between the hard but shy young ghetto artist and the Sunday-school teacher. Rita asked Bob about his family, and he told her about his parents and his childhood in St Ann. Rummaging in a dusty corner of his little room at the studio, he showed Rita a huge pile of letters from his mother in Delaware, all urging him to come and live with her and find work. Rita asked Bob why he let Cedella's letters pile up like that, and he replied he was just too busy to answer them. So Rita volunteered as Bob's secretary, helping him with his papers, writing out the songs that he wrote and answering his mail. One of the first letters she wrote was to Cedella up in Wilmington, politely introducing herself and explaining why Bob had not answered any of his mother's letters.

As the two became closer, Rita sensed that Bob was under some other pressure besides the daily grind of conducting auditions and rehearsals for Coxsone. He complained to her of severe headaches and frequent nightmares, and Rita felt that she might have mistaken his suffering for aloofness and ganja-induced introversion. She was also concerned that the extremely poor living conditions of the studio shack might be contributing to Bob's problems.

Finally, after extracting from her a strict vow of secrecy, Bob confided in Rita. Very seriously, Bob explained that he was being attacked every night by a duppy, a spirit, universally feared in Jamaica, whose human burial was incomplete or whose grave had been violated. To Jamaicans, a duppy is a deeply disturbed spirit who is unable to take its rightful place as an ancestral voice or protector of the clan. Often the duppy is snared by a wicked obeah man, a necromancer and herbal wizard whose black arts descend from ancient Afro-Caribbean strains of magic, and once a duppy is under an obeah man's control it can wreak terrible death and destruction among the living.

Talking in hushed tones, Bob told Rita that the duppy was pulling him out of his bed every night and ruining his sleep. Afterwards, he would get a terrible headache. He seemed ashamed to be telling Rita his troubles, especially since Rita, a church-goer, believed in Jesus, not in duppies, and Bob knew it. But Rita told him that she wanted to help him, and agreed to stay with him one night behind the studio so she could experience the duppy for herself. Together, she told him, they would deal with the problem.

That night she stayed behind with Bob when Coxsone and the other musicians left for the night and Coxsone locked the studio behind him.

It was the first night Rita Anderson had ever slept away from her home. Their bed was an old door laid out on two blocks. Rita had brought some sheets from her aunt's house so she and Bob would be able to cover themselves.

Some time later, after they had gone to sleep, Rita was painfully wrenched awake. She found herself on the floor, with the breath knocked out of her, trying to scream out to Bob who was still lying fitfully asleep. But no sound came from her mouth, and utter terror set in, something Rita explains as a feeling of 'going through changes'. It was a terrible, paralysing sense of dread, something that her Christian faith had never given her room to fear before. When she was able to regain her speech, she woke Bob and told him what had happened, then vomited with a violence she had never before felt. When the tremors had subsided, Bob took her out to the standpipe and washed her off, and tried his best to calm her.

Now Rita understood what Bob was going through. But where could he live? Before Coxsone had taken him in, Bob had been cotching on the streets or staying in Tartar Ford's kitchen. With his mother away, and sleeping space in the ghettos at an absolute premium, Bob was very much the rolling stone, without a home. Struggling with a bewildering array of philosophical loyalties from Rudeness to black power, from Christianity to Rasta, from country to city, from subjection to rebellion, Bob gave in to his duppy and resolved to find somewhere else to live.

The following night Rita asked Bob to stay with her in the room she shared with her cousin and Rita's baby daughter Sharon, whom she had conceived during a brief affair a couple of years before. Rita waited until her uncle and aunt had gone to bed, then she and Bob sneaked in through a back window that her cousin had left unlatched, as quietly as possible because her aunt was very strict. In spite of harsh conditions in the slum communities, parents tended to be as strict or stricter than their middle-class counterparts, and children like Rita Anderson were often raised as angels in surroundings that were hellish.

Bob wriggled out of his clothes and got in bed with Rita and her cousin, and at first everything seemed all right. But then their giggling woke up the baby, and Rita's aunt came in and turned on the light and found the three of them cowering in bed. She exploded with rage and threw Rita and Bob out of her house, refusing to unlock the front door and making them leave by the same back window through which they had come. The two lovers sat out all night under the stars, and talked of things to come.

The situation was temporarily resolved when Rita threatened to leave

the household if a place was not made for Bob, and when she heard this, the aunt knew that Rita was serious, because the girl had been raised as a shining example of the good ghetto child – disciplined, hard-working, talented, respectable – and even enjoyed a kind of moral authority in the Greenwich Park Road neighbourhood, where people called her 'Goddi', short for godmother. Finally, Rita's aunt agreed to build a little shack for Bob behind the house.

Late in 1964, a little more than a year after she had remarried and moved to Delaware, Cedella had saved enough money to send Bob an aeroplane ticket so that he could join her in the States and start a new life. But by the time Bob received the ticket, he had met Rita and he was beginning to rise in the Jamaican music world, so he decided to postpone any northward migration for a year. He hoped the Wailers would be able to earn enough to lift the group out of Trench Town without having to leave the familiarity of Jamaica. He spent the year working at Coxsone's, managing the Soulettes, and living with Rita in Greenwich Park Road, playing his guitar as if it had been magically grafted on to his body, singing and composing snatches of songs about the things they heard on the sidewalk in the cool of the evening. 'We were poor and under-privileged and always wanting,' Rita says now. 'But we knew there was a chance and a way out.'

At Christmas 1965 the Wailers went to Coxsone and demanded money for the royalties they thought were owed the group for the string of hits they had had that year. At first Coxsone claimed that the weekly retainer he paid each Wailer meant that he didn't owe them anything. Then, after hours of haggling, recriminations and threats, Coxsone paid out £60 in cash, to be split among the group. Peter Tosh says that the band had been expecting a big payday at the end of the year; they had been receiving only 'something like six dollars a week when we had positions number one, two, three, seven and nine on the local charts'.

Under Coxsone Dodd, Wailermania in Jamaica left a deep impression on the national psyche but little or no money in the pockets of the Wailers. Bob's hope of achieving success on his own terms was crushed. Disgusted and embittered with Coxsone, Bob consulted Rita and they decided that he would go to America to live with his mother and try to earn enough to start up his own record company when he got back to Kingston. The Wailers now realized that the only way for a musician to survive was to join the rat-race, in which one man records, presses, labels and distributes his own records. Only by controlling the entire production could a musician hope to earn a living.

But, Bob told Rita, there was one condition. He told Rita she had to marry him before he went, so that it would be easier to send for her if he

decided to stay in Delaware. At first Rita told him she didn't want to marry, for the same reasons she gave Bob the year before when he had asked her. Rita's father was working in Sweden, her mother was in England. She said her aunt would never grant her permission for the marriage without Rita's parents meeting Bob and giving their blessing. But Bob persisted and swore he would never leave for America until Rita was his wife. After several more days of discussions and arguments and tears, Rita relented and told Bob that she would marry him if he could get her aunt to agree. So Bob took Rita's aunt a bottle of wine and formally asked to marry Rita so that he could sponsor her for entry to the United States after he had got himself settled. At first she flatly refused, but Bob argued and argued and wore her down until, late in the evening, weakened by the wine, she grudgingly gave her consent.

Bob Marley and Rita Anderson were married on 10 February 1966. Bob wore his black stage suit and his biggest smile for the occasion. A short Rude Boy haircut exposed Bob's ears and made him appear even more slender than he was. Rita wore an above-the-knee wedding dress of purest white, which set off her ebony colour, and a white veil clasped by a tiara of pearls above her forehead. It was a joyous occasion, two of the best singers and brightest hopes of the ghetto joined in a storybook bond. Remembering that day, and the courtship that led up to it, Rita now says, 'It was something out of a dream, like a fairy book. Turn to a page, and there it is.'

But Rita's joy was quickly tempered by sadness, confusion and loneliness. The morning after the marriage, Bob flew off to find work in Delaware, just as his father Norval Marley had left for Kingston the day after he married Cedella up in St Ann.

4 · SOUL REBEL

Name Wailers from the Bible, some place in the Bible. There's plenty of places you meet up with weeping and wailing. Children always wail yunno, cryin' out for justice and all dat . . .(1974)

By 1966 Cedella Booker had her own home and a little grocery shop in Wilmington, an industrial port at the mouth of the Delaware River, and was surviving on the small scale of most hard-working first-generation immigrants to the United States. Although she had never heard the Wailing Wailers perform, their records had been brought to her by new arrivals from Jamaica, and Cedella was extremely proud of her son. When a friend wrote to her from Jamaica and told her that Bob was married, Cedella knew it was a lie because her son would *never* marry without consulting her first, and seeking her blessing. Cedella knew of Rita from the letters she had written on Bob's behalf; the year before Bob had written to Cedella to say that Rita had conceived a baby with him, but had lost it early in her pregnancy. Later, Bob told his mother, 'I know why God take that baby, because I wouldn't have anything to support it.'

When Bob arrived in Wilmington in February 1966, Cedella drove out to the airport to pick him up, along with her niece Enid and Enid's husband. After a joyful reunion at the airport, Cedella eavesdropped on the laughter and whispering she heard in the back seat during the ride back to her house. She heard Bob whisper to Enid that he had married, but by that time Cedella wasn't really surprised. She had known something was in the air.

When they arrived at the house, Bob bounded up the steps two at a time (he always climbed stairs that way) and exulted to Cedella that, back in Jamaica, he had had a strong premonitory vision of her house, and now that he was there the house was *exactly* as he knew it from his

dream. Bob was amazed at the size of the house and the opulence of Cedella's furniture, and was even more surprised to learn that he would have a room and a bath to himself. That night Enid's husband bought a lot of beer and there was a celebration and good stories and singing. Later, when things had quieted down, Bob took Cedella aside and told her: 'Mama, I get married yunno.'

Cedella told Bob that she was aware of it, and felt a little hurt. 'How come you marry and never tell me?'

Bob replied that it wasn't his intention to marry just then, but that Coxsone had told him to marry his girlfriend Rita before he left for America so that it would be easier to send for her if he wanted to. But Bob also made it clear there was more to the marriage than mere convenience. He told his mother, 'You'll like her, mama. She's a *wonderful* girl. She's my queen.' Cedella says that during the seven months he lived with her in Wilmington in 1966 Bob never looked at another woman. When he wasn't working, he stayed at Cedella's and played his guitar, trying to recapture some of the spirit he felt had been washed out of him by Coxsone's manipulation. Over and over, he sang the refrain from a new song he was working on, playing two parts of a sexy rhyme against each other, lingering over the lines: '*Bend down low/Let me tell you what I know . . .*'

Bob worked hard in Wilmington, trying to earn and save enough to get a little record company off the ground when he went back to Jamaica. He worked as a laboratory assistant at the DuPont Chemical Company, under the alias of Donald Marley. He also had part-time work as a parking attendant and as a washer of dishes in a restaurant. Later, he said how much he disliked his experience as a cog in the industrial world. 'Everything was too hot, too noisy, too rush-rush.'

At Cedella's house, mother and son were in a religious conflict. In the four years they had been apart, the Christian youth Cedella had left in Trench Town had been exposed to the powerful attraction of Rastafarianism. Here was a religion that held that Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was the black king whom Marcus Garvey had prophesied would deliver the Negro race. Early Rasta preachers like Leonard Howell in Kingston had read in the *Daily Gleaner* in 1930 that an Ethiopian warlord, Ras Tafari Makonnen, great-grandson of King Selassie Shoa, had been crowned emperor of Ethiopia, and had taken a new name and assumed ancient titles: Haile Selassie ('Power of the Trinity'), King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah. The emperor claimed to be 225th ruler in a line traced from Menelik, the son of Solomon and Sheba. The Garveyite preachers consulted their New Testaments for a sign, and found Revelation 5:

'Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.' When Leonard Howell began to sell one-shilling postcards of Selassie to slum-dwellers, telling them the pictures were their passports back to Africa, he was arrested and committed to an asylum. But colonial Jamaica, church and state, couldn't kill the Rastafaris. 'Cyaan stop prophecy,' they insisted. And concerning Haile Selassie, there was prophecy aplenty. When Benito Mussolini's Italian army invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and Selassie was forced into exile in England, the Rastamen again looked to their Bibles for a sign. 'And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war on him that sat on the throne.' (Revelation 19:19). In 1945, after Winston Churchill engineered Selassie's return to Ethiopia, the prophecy of the next verse (Revelations 19:20) was fulfilled: 'And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that worship his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.' Hitler was the beast, Mussolini the false prophet. Jamaicans are a Bible-oriented people; to many, the evidence was plain and irrefutable.

When Howell was finally let out of the asylum in 1940, he moved a large group of Rastafari followers from the slums of Kingston to an old estate in the mountains called Pinnacle, which was maintained as a Rastafarian commune and ganja plantation until the police raided and closed it down in 1954. The Pinnacle Rastas, distinguished by their long, flamboyant dreadlocks (uncut and uncombed hair, respecting several Old Testament admonitions against the razor), moved back to Kingston, mostly into Back O' Wall and Moonlight Village. The Rastas became the spiritual alternative to the anarchy of the Rude Boys. The asceticism practised by the Rastas – shunning alcohol and salt, and eating only fruits, roots, grains, vegetables and fish – elevated the usual degradations of poverty and the general hopelessness of ghetto life. The Rastafarian sacrament of smoking marijuana as a path to righteous meditation validated an old custom which had been repressed by colonial Jamaica. For the Rastas, the Jamaican government, the police, the established churches, all were extensions of the Biblical wickedness of Babylon, with the black people of the new world representing the captive tribes of Israel sold into captivity. For the Rastas, the notion of any kind of Jamaican nationalism was a cruel joke. Home was Ethiopia in its original sense, as the Greek word for Africa. More important, Haile Selassie was a *black* redeemer, the almighty ever-living God on earth. For Bob Marley's generation the new black consciousness that emerged in that decade was more than just civil rights and black power.

It was black religion. For them, the Messiah was on earth.

Cedella Booker saw it differently. She was born and raised a Christian. She was a member in good standing of the United Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, and here was her first-born son sitting at her kitchen table in Delaware, letting his hair grow into knots and talking to her about Ethiopia. Cedella then thought that she knew better about Rastas, about how, after Pinnacle was closed down and the Rastas had dispersed throughout the ghetto, many criminals and bad boys had taken to wearing dreadlocks so as to have easier access to the slums. For Cedella, Rastas were men who didn't vote and didn't work and didn't go to church and smoked ganja all day long and talked only about suffering. And here was Bob pounding on the table and raising his voice at her, and quoting scripture, reminding Cedella that 'what is hidden from the wise and prudent is not hidden from children'.

Cedella remained unconvinced. Her worst fear was that when Bob returned to Jamaica he would let his hair knot up and become a Rastafarian. For conservative Jamaicans like Cedella, hair length and style clearly indicated social differences; straight silken hair was the ideal, while naturally kinky hair denoted the lower orders. So the Rastafarians, who declared complete secession from society by sporting long matted ropes of hair down their backs, were looked upon with revulsion and real dread by the mass of Jamaicans. The idea of her boy wearing dreadlocks was almost too much for Cedella to bear.

Finally, when Cedella capped a discussion by telling her son that she could never agree with what the Rastas were putting about, Bob blew up. He assumed that hard and distant look he employed to indicate displeasure and spoke with a coldness that Cedella had never seen from him before. 'Yunno, the only reason me chat with ya at all is because your me mother yunno. Because when me a-tell ya the truth and you fumble y'self, me just feel *hot* with ya now. But yunno what? You tell about Jesus Christ. It's hard for me as your son to come and tell ya, seh, *His Majesty Haile Selassie I is God*.'

Bob lived in Wilmington until October, when he decided to go home. But before he left, he had a vision. Bob was alone one Sunday afternoon, and had a dream in which an old man, wearing an army coat and a slouch hat, appeared and handed a him a ring, a gold ring with a tiny diamond set in onyx. When Cedella came home, Bob told her of the dream. Shaken by what her son had told her, Cedella went to her room and produced the same ring that Bob had been given in his vision. It had belonged to his father, Norval Marley, and was one of the few talismans of Norval that Cedella possessed. Bob wore the ring for a time, but decided that it made him uncomfortable. He returned the ring to

Cedella before he left for Jamaica, where the dream and its meaning would later be given a very different interpretation.

When Bob told his mother he was going home, Cedella was upset. 'You're goin' go back home and turn *Rasta*,' she spat. But there might have been other pressures on Bob as well. Years later, he hinted to a reporter that he had applied for social security in Delaware, and a local draft board had then became interested in him as cannon-fodder for Vietnam.

In October 1966 Bob returned to Kingston and to Rita Marley at 18 Greenwich Park Road. He had been gone less than a year, but things had changed. Rastafarianism had hit the headlines when His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia had made a state visit to Jamaica in April. Although Rita had written in detail to Bob about the visit, when they were reunited she spilled out the story of Selassie's hand. For weeks before the Emperor arrived Jamaica had whipped itself to a peak of anxiety and expectation. If Jah was coming in person to bestow his blessing on Jamaica, could the last days, the days of judgment, atonement and salvation be far behind? Devout Rastas from the Trelawany cockpits, the hills of Clarendon and the Blue Mountains of Portland began walking to Kingston weeks before Selassie's arrival, and thousands camped out on the palisadoes, the narrow strip of land that leads to Kingston airport. At first, Rita and her friends weren't sure if they would come out to greet Selassie; the very idea seemed so momentous. Could this man possibly be the Redeemer, whose coming Rita had taught in Sunday school? Would Spirit really return in Flesh? They said Selassie had nail-prints on his palms. Rita made a pact with herself: if she went to see Selassie, and if she could see the nail-print of the crucifixion in his hand, then she would believe in him.

The morning of 6 April 1966 began with a drenching wall of thunder-showers that soaked the thousands of Jamaicans who had turned out to welcome the Emperor. Rita and her friends walked from Trench Town towards the airport as far as the cement works on Windward Road. At the airport, there was utter pandemonium when the Emperor's jet broke through the cloud cover and descended to the runway. From nowhere, a flock of snow-white doves materialized and flew over the impatient throng. When the assembled Rastafarians beheld the imperial lion on the plane's fuselage, thousands rampaged through police lines and swarmed all over the plane even as the engines were being shut down. Rasta brethren fired up the giant ganja waterpipes they call 'chalices' in the shade cast by the imperial wings. The air was full of singing and chanting and the recitation of psalms. Hundreds prostrated themselves on the tarmac and waited for the

Emperor to come out. Slowly, the door was opened and the faithful beheld Selassie standing in the doorway of his jet. A shout went up of such raw religious frenzy that Selassie quickly ordered the door to the plane shut, and refused to come out for an hour. Eventually, all pretence of an elaborate state ceremony of welcome were dropped, and the event would enter Rastafarian lore as the 'capture of ceremonies'. The Emperor was finally coaxed to leave his plane when Mortimer Planno, a Rastafarian elder who served as a kind of *ex officio* bishop of the Kingston brethren, climbed up the ramp and persuaded the multitude to give His Majesty some room.

Hours later Selassie's motorcade flashed past Rita and her group. The young musicians had been expecting to see a great and noble king, larger than life itself, so they were surprised when Selassie proved to be a tiny man with a mild aspect to his eyes, almost hidden in the back of his open car. Rita thought to herself, *bwai, if I could only see his hand*; and, just as the thought ran through her head, Selassie raised his hand and waved to her. 'And when I looked into his hand,' she said later, 'there was the nail-print, the mark, that black mark in the centre of his hand. I said, "My God! This is the man!" '

Most important, during the remainder of Selassie's visit, prominent Rastas like Mortimer Planno were included in the official delegations that accompanied Selassie on his brief stay. The Jamaican government, which regarded the Rastafarians as anti-social drop-outs and potentially dangerous, was forced to deal with them almost on the level of a new national religion. The JLP government had been hoping that Selassie would deny the divinity proclaimed him by his Jamaican followers, but the Emperor hardly said a word. Anyway, the Rastas said, the prophecy could not be gainsaid.

Selassie's visit may have temporarily altered some official Jamaican attitudes, but after the Emperor went home again things went from bad to worse. In July, while Bob was still in Delaware, the squatters' camp at Back O' Wall, home of many Kingston Rastas, was bulldozed to make way for the Tivoli Gardens housing project. Thousands lost their homes and many Rastas were arrested and otherwise brutalized by the army and police. Once again, hundreds of Rastas were forced to disperse further through the neighbourhoods of western Kingston.

Bob also found that some interesting changes had occurred in his musical family as well. Bunny's 'Rude Boy' had been a big hit in his absence, and Rita's first single for Coxsone, 'Pied Piper', had sold well also. The Wailing Wailers had continued to record while Bob was in the States, with Rita's cousin Vision filling in Bob's harmony behind Bunny's lead on a sunny ska-spiritual called 'Who Feels It' (an early

version of Bunny's 'Who Feels It Knows It') and on 'Dancing Shoes', a hot dance number that featured a great hard-bop tenor sax break by Tommy McCook, who had replaced Roland Alphonso in the Soul Vendors.

In those few months major structural changes had taken place in Jamaican music. During the extremely hot, uncomfortable summer of 1966, Jamaican dancing had slowed down and the sound systems subsequently demanded a new beat. Almost overnight the quick bouncy ska step evolved into a beat the musicians were calling rock-steady. The prevailing rhythm now was much slower, more relaxed and sensual. Alton Ellis, credited by some with naming the beat, said, 'I could feel the rock, and it was *steadier*, so I wrote a song called "Get Ready To Rock Steady".' But there were other factors in the evolution from ska to rock-steady besides a hot summer and dancers wanting something different. The race riots of 1965, the destruction of the Back O' Wall ghetto in July 1966, and the nascent black power movement had raised the social temperature in Kingston to a feverish degree. The struggle for control of Jamaica – then held by the JLP prime minister, Hugh Shearer – was turning into armed conflict, and agents of the two political parties began pressing the previously anarchist Rude Boys into goon squads along lines of party loyalty. Violence in the ghetto became systematized, turning once open neighbourhoods into militant enclaves controlled by gunmen and party bosses. The slower beat of rock-steady, and the accompanying rise of protest lyrics was no accident.

Bob later described to a reporter his own analysis of the change: 'The guys who were in control robbed the older musicians up, and they get frustrated and stop playing. So the musicians changed from the older musicians to the younger, hungrier ones who was coming up underneath them. People like I, we love James Brown and we dip into that American bag. We don't want to stand around playing and singing that ska beat any more. The young musicians, dem have a different beat. It was rock-steady now, *eager to go*!'

Rock-steady in Jamaica conjured a new generation of talented singers and musicians from the ghettos and hill villages, young men and women unafraid to express intimate feelings and social protest. It included some hold-overs from ska – Alton Ellis and the Flames, the Maytals, Stranger Cole – and newer groups like the Heptones, the Gaylads, the Melodians, Slim Smith and the Techniques, the Paragons. Singers like Ken Boothe elevated the Jamaican love ballad to new heights; when Dobby Dobson sang 'Loving Pauper' every young person in Jamaica could identify with the singer's concern for character and spiritual values over the empty glitter of materialism.

Bob Marley's identity as an observing Rastafarian began to blossom after his return to Jamaica. His hair, uncut during his last months at Cedella's house in Wilmington, began to knot up and a sparse beard sprouted. Peter Tosh also let his hair grow, and Bunny had been a Rasta enthusiast for at least four years. The Wailers then, early in 1967, were the first of the Jamaican vocal groups to adopt the style of the Rastafarians, eating a fairly strict diet, smoking huge amounts of ganja, reading the Bible daily, and speaking in the esoteric patois of the dread adept.

The group's religious and social consciousness eventually brought the Wailers into long-overdue conflict with Coxsone Dodd. Dodd was a Jamaican businessman of the old school, who paid musicians with bus fares and sweets on Fridays and responded with violence to any protests. While Bob was in America, Tosh and Bunny had staged an impromptu sit-down strike in Coxsone's studio after Tosh refused to play the organ for free on someone's tune and to leave the studio when Coxsone tried to throw him out. Tosh told Coxsone to get his gun, but Coxsone called in the police. All this put Bob in a strange position, since he was more Coxsone's employee than either Peter or Bunny. Bunny remembers that Bob occasionally 'got a little weird' and seemed to side with Coxsone.

United again, the Wailers decided to leave Coxsone and form their own label, using some of the money Bob had saved while working in Delaware. They recorded one last song with him, based on the riff that Bob had been developing in America, 'Bend Down Low', and it was a rock-steady sex chant. They had recorded over fifty tracks for Coxsone – soulful ballads, ska-rockers, Rude Boy anthems and rock-steady shuffles. Though Coxsone had more than twenty hit singles with them in Jamaica alone, and had licensed dozens of Wailers singles to British record companies, like Chris Blackwell's Island Records, the group had seen almost no money, and were especially infuriated when 'Bend Down Low' was a hit and the group was again uncompensated. 'Them rob we out of it again,' Marley said later. 'Man, all is robbery.'

Years later, Dodd gave his own version of the parting. 'Well, they started to get into this Rasta thing . . . and I wasn't ready to go with that. Then they broke the contract because they figured that they were under-age (when they had signed) and I had used my own lawyer to straighten out things between us. Bob Marley was more or less like an adoption, 'cos he used to stay by me yunno, and I used to provide whatever he needed.'

Bob next came under the guidance of Mortimer Planno, the Rastafarian elder of western Kingston. Recognizing that the youth had

visionary qualities far beyond his own, Planno assumed the role thrust on him by Bob, that of spiritual advisor and *de facto* manager of Bob Marley and the Wailers. As his faith deepened (and when Rita became pregnant with their first child), Bob moved out of Kingston, back to St Ann and the one-room cabin that Omeriah (who died in 1965) had built for Cedella twenty years before. He and Rita and their baby, a girl they named Cedella, remained there until 1970, commuting to Kingston when business required.

Life in St Ann was both hard and idyllic. Rita remembers it as the best time of her marriage to Bob. Bob was a farmer again, planting corn and a little ganja on the side, wearing blue denim bib overalls most of the time, his hair getting longer and knottier, though he kept it pent up in a wool cap much of the time. He and his cousins and friends spent long days in the St Ann hills, walking the proud land, cementing a covenant between themselves and the place of their birth. And the deeper Bob delved into the Bible, the deeper his Rastafarian faith became. Much time was spent sitting on a boulder next to the cabin, playing Bob's guitar, working on songs. Bob and Rita together composed three songs that year: 'Nice Time', 'Stir It Up' and 'Chances Are'. Another song, 'Belly Full', began to take shape. And an early version of 'Trench Town Rock' was chorded out one winter evening in 1967 while Bob was perched on his boulder, watching the sun disappear behind the mountain at five o'clock. It wouldn't be recorded for another three years.

The Wailers' own label was called Wailin' Soul Records, though some of the labels of the singles they issued during the few months the company existed read 'Wail'n Soul'm'. Among the early Wailin' Soul releases were 'This Man Is Back', announcing Bob's return to Jamaica, and 'Selassie Is the Chapel', in which Bob atones for missing Selassie's visit to Jamaica the year before. Sung to the tune of the old Sonny Til and the Orioles tear-jerker, 'Crying In The Chapel', 'Selassie Is the Chapel' was Bob Marley's first recorded song of Rastafarian faith. Another song from this era, 'Bus Dem Shut', reaffirms the Wailers' commitment to the youth of Jamaica, who 'burst their shirt' with pride and hard work.

At first, Wailin' Soul Records seemed as if it might be a success. Recording with young producer Clancy Eccles, the Wailers had several popular dance hall hits. 'Nice Time' was slow rock-steady, great for dancing, with the big-sounding bass line that had replaced the blaring horns of ska as the instrumental focus of Jamaican pop. One of Bob's greatest songs of seduction, 'Nice Time' boasted Bunny's high soaring harmony and an acute longing in the lyric: '*Long time we no have no nice*

time/what do do ya do ya think about that?/This is my heart to rock you steady/I'll give you love any time you're ready.' On the flip side was 'Hypocrite', a favourite target of Bob's: '*See de hypocrite/Dem a galong dey.*' Also successful locally was 'Stir It Up', an early version of the love song Bob co-wrote with Rita in St Ann.

But despite the early successes, the Wailers were too inexperienced to run their own label. Based on their past reputation as hit-makers, the Wailin' Soul records were played at dances and sound systems, but airplay on the radio was non-existent. Marvin Gaye and James Brown ruled Jamaican radio. The group didn't have the necessary show-business connections. 'We were too young for producing,' Peter Tosh says. 'We never understood certain important things, like how to get on the radio or sell our records. We only knew how to make them. And the other producers were holding us down as little producers, as usually big guy control small guy.'

Later on, Bob would recollect the disappointment the group felt about the label. 'We fight *hard*, mon. But when Christmas come and we go to collect money, the mon seh the stamper mosh and alla dat.' The Wailers were apparently told that the stamper, the machine that actually presses the records, had broken and so no records had been sold. Wailin' Soul Records went quietly out of business toward the end of 1967.

The following year was one of world-wide turmoil and revolution. Young black Jamaicans looked north and saw that Detroit was on fire and Harlem and other American black ghettos were burning up. Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X and H. Rap Brown echoed the firestorm rhetoric of Marcus Garvey in new, more militant voices. In California, a new organization called the Black Panthers were patrolling ghettos with shotguns, saying that they were protecting ghetto people from police violence. And there was a new map of Africa, redrawn by the various successful anti-colonial movements. In Paris and all over Europe, university students were agitating against war and what they felt was a dehumanizing capitalist system. The student protest movement reached boiling-point in Jamaica in 1968, when a popular University of the West Indies history professor from Guyana named Walter Rodney was refused re-entry to Jamaica at the Kingston airport when he returned from a black writers' conference in Canada. While teaching in Jamaica, Rodney had encouraged political activities among the sufferers in western Kingston. (One of these was a young thief named Orlando Wong, who later, as Oku Onuora, would become one of Jamaica's most famous poets.) When word reached the UWI campus that Rodney had been banned, a protest meeting was held, attended by

both radical students and Rodney's friends from the slums. The meeting turned into several days of rioting, leaving many injured and arrested. (Walter Rodney subsequently became leader of the opposition Working People's Alliance in Guyana, where he was assassinated in 1980 for trying to throw out that country's repressive oligarchy under Forbes Burnham.)

Perhaps reflecting this new spirit of general rebellion among young black radicals, Bob Marley cut off his locks and combed out his hair in the fashionable 'Afro' style. Peter Tosh was arrested in 1968, along with Prince Buster, after Buster had organized a street demonstration in downtown Kingston to protest about oppression in Rhodesia under Ian Smith. Both Bob and Bunny were also arrested that year for possession of ganja. Bob had been a passenger in a car whose driver had been busted at a police roadblock. Bob was in jail for a month, and felt the experience very deeply. Bunny, however, had been caught with several pounds of the herb, and was sentenced to a year in the General Penitentiary and then a work camp for minimum security prisoners.

While Bunny served his time, the Wailers' career sputtered to a near halt. Bob spent much of his time playing football, listening intently to the Jimi Hendrix Experience and the new funk modes of Sly and the Family Stone, and working on new songs. When Rita gave birth to their first son in 1968, Bob was ecstatic. He named the boy David Marley, but everyone called the child Ziggy. In the same year, Bob entered one of his new songs, 'Don't Rock My Boat', in a national competition to decide which new song would represent Jamaica at Carifesta, the annual pan-Caribbean cultural festival. Bob's hope was that his song would win, and the group's career would revive. 'Don't Rock My Boat' wasn't even placed, and Bob Marley was again disappointed.

The late 1960s were as confusing for the Wailers as they were for everyone else. Outwardly, they styled themselves in the black power trappings of the day – the ghetto identity, the fists in the air, rebellious music, Afro hairstyles. Peter Tosh became a skilled carver of Afro-picks, the long-tined wooden combs used to tease out hair for a 'natural' look, and his Afro-picks were in demand all over western Kingston. They were particularly admired by the twelve-year-old Tyrone Downie, then an aspirant comb-carver living in Kingston 11.

But the real Bob had already moved away from confrontation. Mortimer Planno had guided Bob towards Rasta as an alternative spiritual nationality for the descendants of slaves who found themselves caught between their heritage and their destiny. Planno's teachings were simple: that every black person has an African consciousness that most in the New World fail to recognize; that God was again on earth, in

the person of Haile Selassie; and that salvation and the fall of Babylon was imminent. Something, the Rastas were sure, was bound to happen. Bob responded to the spiritual feeling of the times by entrusting all his temporal affairs to Mortimer Planno. Planno applied some of his natural charisma and leadership abilities toward advancing the Wailers' cause during 1968, but without much luck. At the same time, Bob was beginning to be influenced by a new Rastafarian sect that had been founded in Jones Town that year, the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Members of the Twelve Tribes held that the second coming of Christ had already occurred, in the person of Haile Selassie, whose words are revered and referred to constantly. As Bob became more interested in the esoteric doctrines of Rastafari, he increased his attendance at the 'groundations', Rasta prayer meetings that combined hours of drumming and religious chanting with herbal meditation. One of the guiding forces of the Twelve Tribes was astrology, and each new member was assigned a tribe according to the month of his birth. Many members discard their 'slave names' and adopt the name of their natal tribe – Dan, Levi, Gad, etc. Vernon Carrington, who founded the movement, is known as Gad the Prophet. Bob later explained: 'Gad revealed back to I and I [the Rasta form for 'we'] the secret of the lost Twelve Tribes. I was born in February, so I'm from the tribe of *Joseph*. Now someone born in April could say they were from Aries, and that's what they will be, because the word is power and you live it. But if you say that you are *Reuben*, then you realize you find your roots because you become Jacob's children, which is Israel. Jacob said, "Thou art Reuben, thou art my first-born, the beginning of my strength, the excellence of my dignity." '

Johnny Nash was already a star when he met Bob Marley.

Born in Houston in 1940, Nash grew up in church choirs and developed a clear, ringing tenor and a passionate delivery, especially in ballads. In 1955, when he was fifteen, he was 'discovered' by American radio personality Arthur Godfrey for whom he was caddying on a golf course. Nash became a member of Godfrey's radio family, and his voice became familiar to millions of Americans via Godfrey's weekly broadcasts. When Godfrey made the transition from radio to television, Johnny Nash became one of the first black Americans to be regularly featured on network television in the United States, breaking through barriers that had blocked black advancement in American entertainment for decades. In the early 1960s Nash starred in two Hollywood films, *Take A Giant Step* and *Key Witness*, and was considered a hot property. He had recorded five albums of middle-of-the-road white-

oriented pop music for ABC-Paramount, which had sold well. But Johnny Nash, handsome, successful, dynamic, felt something was wrong. There was a new spirit for blacks in the land, but his audience was completely white. He was already beginning to change his style by the time he met Danny Sims, a young black promoter.

Danny Sims was a former college football player who came to New York because he wanted to get involved with the entertainment business. In the late 1950s he opened a restaurant called Sapphire's in Manhattan, the first black supper club in New York that was downtown, that is, not in Harlem. Sapphire's quickly became a hang-out for black performers on Broadway – Sammy Davis Jr, Harry Belafonte, Ossie Davis – and young stars like Johnny Nash, all attracted by some of the best soul food in New York. Danny started dating Johnny's sister, and Johnny and Danny became friends. When Johnny was preparing for a concert tour of the Caribbean, he asked Danny to manage the tour for him. Sims' promotions for Johnny Nash were so successful that Nash outdrew even Sammy Davis Jr in Puerto Rico and Trinidad, and Sims was out of the restaurant business for good. In 1960 Sims brought Brook Benton, the New Orleans soul singer who was a great favourite of Bob's, to Jamaica for a series of successful concerts. Less than a year later, Sims' New York company, International Attractions, was the biggest promoter of American acts in the Caribbean, dispatching talent like Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding and Curtis Mayfield on the Caribbean circuit.

In 1964 Johnny Nash and Danny Sims started a record company called JODA Records (JODA stood for Johnny and Danny). In the next two years JODA had a dozen hit singles (one of their acts was the Cowsills), but, unable to sell albums, the main source of cash in the record business, the company filed for bankruptcy in 1966.

But Sims had other plans, plans that were years ahead of their time. From promoting American singers in Jamaica, Sims knew of the incredible, untapped vitality of the music in Kingston. Realizing that he could record American 'product' cheaply in Kingston, Sims moved his family, Johnny Nash's family, and that of producer Arthur Jenkins to the lush mountain suburbs of Kingston. Sims re-established his music publishing company in the Cayman Islands, an offshore tax haven and banking centre between Jamaica and Cuba, and renamed his company Cayman Music. He bought a big villa in Russell Heights, one of Kingston's better districts, and settled down to make music and wait out 'the revolution' that he felt was hurting black record business in the States.

At first, Nash and Sims had little interest in Jamaican music, which

sounded primitive to them. The Jamaican ska and rock-steady forms had until then been deemed too weird for the American market, but when local musicians began teaching their rhythms to Johnny Nash, he began writing songs with a subtle Jamaican flavour, some of which ended up on the first album he recorded in Kingston, *Hold Me Tight*. Its Jamaican influence was clear even though the music was mostly played by top New York session musicians that Danny Sims had flown in for the recording. More important, the album sold well around the world on the wings of its two best songs, 'Hold Me Tight' and a version of Sam Cooke's 'Cupid', almost pure 1968 rock-steady.

Nash was also intrigued by the Rastafarians he was hearing about from the Jamaicans he was jamming with, so when Neville Willoughby, one of the top radio DJs in Jamaica, offered to escort him to a Rastafarian groundation, Nash readily accepted. Willoughby took him to one of the Twelve Tribes' street meetings, where large crowds of the Rasta faithful gathered on Sunday afternoons for 'Satta Amassagana' (meaning 'give thanks and praise' in Ethiopia's Amharic language). After the chanting and prayer session, Nash was introduced to two of the island's most popular younger singers, Bob and Rita Marley.

Danny Sims remembers Johnny Nash coming back to his house in Russell Heights that night excited by the scene he had witnessed; he talked about a beautiful black woman named Rita, and her husband Bob, who had all these wonderful songs. Nash was so enthused that he had invited the young couple up to Russell Heights the next afternoon, so Danny Sims would have a chance to hear the Marleys sing for himself.

When Neville Willoughby brought Bob and Rita up to his house the following day, Danny Sims says, 'Bob Marley must have sung twenty straight Goddamn hit records.' With Rita deftly harmonizing as Bob strummed chords on his acoustic guitar, Bob sang 'Nice Time', 'Chances Are', 'Don't Rock My Boat', 'Lively Up Yourself' and many others into the tropical afternoon. Sims was impressed, and both he and Nash immediately wanted to work with the Wailers, especially after they met Peter Tosh and heard the records of the third Wailer, Bunny Livingston, stuck in the penitentiary. Bob and Peter began spending time at Sims' place (the neighbours immediately started to complain of the presence of Rastafarians in their exclusive area) and the Wailers' long professional relationship with Danny Sims began to be planned. It was some time before they actually began to work with Sims, especially with Bunny in jail, so Bob and Rita went back to St Ann for several months to work on songs. Of 1968 Bob said later, 'The politics get hot and the city get hot, so I was in the country planting corn. Johnny Nash

and his manager came down to me, to write songs for them. They felt like I was finished with music. They didn't know that I was only resting.'

When Sims met with Bob and told him that he would like to represent the Wailers internationally, as song-writers, Bob naturally referred him to Mortimer Planno. Sims and Planno conferred, and a deal was struck. Bob, Peter and Bunny were all hired as song-writers by Cayman Music at a weekly retainer of $50 a week each. Mortimer Planno, according to Sims, asked for and was given a piece of the action.

When Bunny was released from prison near the end of 1968, the Wailers began cutting demonstration recordings of the songs they had written for Sims. Over the next four years the Wailers recorded over eighty tracks for Sims, first at West Indian Recording (now Dynamic Studios), and later at Harry J's studio in uptown Kingston. Bob refused to record at Sims' first choice of studios, Federal Records, because of a long-simmering feud with the owner, Ken Khouri. At Dynamic Studios, Bunny says, 'We used to do some *wicked* late-night work. Sometimes we done the next morning. Me can recall musicians like Hux Brown on guitar and Jackie Jackson on bass. We did a version of "Nice Time" with Hugh Masakela playing trumpet . . . me nuh get no pay all now.'

By early 1969 Sims had formed a new record company called JAD Records, which stood for Johnny, Arthur and Danny. Arthur Jenkins, the new partner, was the arranger and producer responsible for some of the music on the sessions the Wailers did for Sims. Years later after Bob Marley's star had risen considerably higher, there would be a heated dispute as to whether the Wailers' sessions for Sims that began in 1968 were ever meant to be released by JAD or were in fact merely demo sessions for Wailers songs written under contract to Cayman Music. Some of the songs, although not released for years, provide a glimpse at Bob Marley and the Wailers' more commercial side in the late 1960s.

According to Danny Sims, 'There was no "Jah" in the music Bob was making back then. It was all "Jesus" this and "Lord" that. The revolutionary music didn't come until the Manley government in 1972.' More likely, the three Wailers song-writers assumed that Sims, now remote from the black power struggles in the States, was only interested in rock-steady dance music. 'Mellow Mood' was a scorching Bob Marley seduction song, laced with amorous boasting, '*Gonna play your favorite song/Darlin'/Gonna rock you all night long*' and Jamaican folk imagery, '*Strike the hammer/While iron is hot/Open up your heart/Let love come running in*'. If the thrust of the song was typical priapic Marley, the meticulous harmonies were ethereal. A new rock-steady version

updated the Wailers' ska oldie 'Put It On', while 'How Many Times' and 'There She Goes' recall the group's history as a street-corner doo-wop ensemble. Although the Wailers had really lost interest in this old fashioned material, they still performed it dutifully, as if they thought their fans demanded it.

Somewhat more successful were two of Peter Tosh's songs, 'Hammer' (which injected a slightly Rude note into the sessions) and 'You Can't Do That To Me', an early version of Tosh's 'Stop That Train', which became a staple on the Wailers' early tours. 'Hold On To This Feeling,' a knockout Bob and Rita duet, was styled after Marvin Gaye and Tammy Terrell and never released. 'Touch Me' stole the melody of the American pop hit 'Dream Lover' and 'Treat You Right' was a song by Bunny in very early reggae time. Perhaps the best of the early sessions for Sims was the first version of 'Soul Rebel', a post-Rude boasting song that indicated a more humane direction for the Wailers: *I'm a rebel/Soul rebel/I'm a capturer/Soul adventurer.*

But none of this music matched the power of the Wailers' previous hits and, with the exception of 'Mellow Mood', the JAD sessions did not produce more of the Trench Town experience, and what young Jamaicans had come to expect from Bob Marley and the Wailers by then.

In early 1969 the hottest producer of Jamaican music was still Leslie Kong, proprietor of Beverley's Records. Kong's production of a song called 'Israelites' in 1968 by Desmond Dekker, Bob's old friend from the South Camp Road welding yard, was the first Jamaican record to be a world-wide hit since Millie Small's 'My Boy Lollipop'. Another Kong record from 1968, the Pioneers' 'Long Shot Kick The Bucket' (the tale of a dead racehorse), was a big hit among England's West Indian population. Jamaican music was again just beginning to change its basic rhythms, this time shifting down a gear from rock-steady into the even slower, Rasta-influenced and ganja-pollinated mode called reggae. Leslie Kong produced a dance tune by the Maytals called 'Do the Reggay', which validated the new beat and inadvertently named it as well. The word 'reggae' had several mysterious connotations. Toots Hibbert of the Maytals, who wrote the song, later said the word meant 'regular', referring to its steady, ticking rhythm. Joe Higgs identified the word with 'streggae', ghetto patois for rudeness. Others say reggae means ragged, rough, of the streets. In any case, Kong's artistic stable included some of the island's best singers – Ken Boothe, Delroy Wilson, the Melodians and a crack early reggae studio band, Beverley's All-Stars, which included bassists Lloyd Parkes and Jackie Jackson,

drummer Paul Douglas, Gladstone Anderson and Winston Wright on keyboards, and guitarists Rad Bryan, Lynn Tait and Hux Brown.

This was the band that backed the three Wailers when they recorded an album's worth of tracks for Leslie Kong early in 1969. Nominally, the group was still signed to Cayman Music, but Nash and Sims had cut back JAD operations and agreed to let the Wailers record for local Kingston producers after Bob had complained that the group needed to make a living. The only stipulation was that the recordings be released in the Caribbean only, leaving the potentially more lucrative English and American markets for the JAD partnership.

The ten songs the Wailers' recorded for Leslie Kong in 1969 are the most modern-sounding of the Wailers' early period, and all have that special Beverley's swing, emblematic of the new energy and enthusiasm that went into the earliest reggae recordings. The jazzy saxes and trumpets that dominated ska and rock-steady disappear, and instrumental breaks are now played by the electric guitar. Most of the songs are dance tunes, but the Wailers' irrepressible social concern surfaces now and then. 'Soul Shakedown Party' is a nonsense dance lyric countered by Tosh's 'Stop That Train', which told of the mental anguish of a Rasta prophet without honour in his own country: *All my life I've been a lonely man/Teaching people who don't understand/Even though I try my best/I still can't find no happiness/Stop that train, I'm leaving/Won't be too long, whether I'm right or wrong . . .*

'Caution' is a brooding Marley composition, whose mystery is to be found in obscure lyric imagery rich in warnings: *Caution, the road is wet/Caution, the road is hot/You got to do better than that.* The track is punctuated by the guitar-stuttering that was standard in Leslie Kong's records, over which Bob exults, '*Hit me from the top, you crazy motherfunky!*' in true James Brown style.

Peter Tosh sang an authoritative lead vocal on a version of the civil-rights spiritual 'Go Tell It On The Mountain', as well as on his own song, 'Soon Come', which bewails the Jamaican attitude of better late than never. Although these were message songs, the crisp, bright arrangements made perfect sense to dancers. Tosh was starting to be recognized as a writer with the same kind of tough and direct voice as the more visible Bob Marley. Another Tosh song, 'Can't You See', previously recorded for Coxsone, was modernized and softened by Kong, inflected with the more modern sound coming from his studio.

Two of the Wailers' tracks for Kong were in a more serious vein. 'Soul Captives' was basically a harmony showpiece with the hook-line '*Soul captives are free.*' More substantial was the beautiful 'Cheer up', which set the tone of black unity that would preoccupy an older Bob

Marley: *I know it won't be long/That changes got to come/We been down in captivity (so long)/If we unite we will be free (so strong)/Cheer up my brother/Cheer up my sister/Cheer up my mother/Cheer up my father/And I'll be cheerful too.*

The Kong sessions were rounded off by a pair of classic sex chants. 'Back Out' was one of the first Wailers songs to feature Bob singing in a style that ached with desire, that communicated a palpable lust, sparked by perfectly-timed James Brown grunts – '*Back out, unh, and shut your mouth.*' Bob was in such control now as a singer that he could produce instant reactions in attentive dancers, rocking the groove of a song with scat phrases and repetitive soul slang. This kind of singing, coupled with the appalling chop of hard reggae rhythm guitar, was nothing less than a set-up for secular Jamaican spirit possession, trance music of the highest order. Equally seducing was another Marley love song, 'Do It Twice', the tale of a young man who lived in the woods alone, and needed some female company.

Although Leslie Kong released eight or nine Wailers singles both in Jamaica and in England, the response was lukewarm and the records failed commercially. Kong notified the group that he intended to put out an album of tracks the Wailers had cut for him, to be called *The Best Of The Wailers*. Bunny flew into a rage and told Kong that the title was a lie, since the best of the Wailers was obviously yet to come, and threatened that if the album was released, Kong would die. Although Bunny was rumoured to have more than a passing acquaintance with the black arts of obeah, Kong paid no attention and the album was issued in Jamaica. A year later Leslie Kong, at thirty-eight the most important producer in Jamaica and one of the prime developers of reggae music, suffered a sudden and massive heart-attack in his studio and dropped dead. He had only recently finished recording the seminal Jimmy Cliff songs for the basic soundtrack to a new film called *The Harder They Come*.

The Wailers' main hang-out in 1969 was at the Soul Shack, a little record shop presided over mainly by Rita in an alley behind Half-Way Tree Boulevard in Kingston. But neither the Wailers' recordings nor the shop brought in the kind of money that Bob needed to realize his dream of a custom record label, one where the musicians would control their music. Toward this goal, Bob again left Jamaica and went back to the United States to live with his mother and work.

Beginning in the spring, he worked for Chrysler on a truck assembly line, and on a variety of other part-time jobs as well, including a night shift at a warehouse. At Cedella's house, he played his guitar incessantly

and worked on songs, most notably 'Comma Comma' and 'It's Alright', a lively affirmation that hard-working people can get it if they really want: '*The sun shall not smite me by day/Nor the moon by night/But everything that I do/Shall be hopeful and right.*' Afterwards Bob looked back with wry amusement at the wage-slavery he endured in Delaware, and seven years later he reworked 'It's Alright' for an album, retitling it 'Night Shift'.

Meanwhile, back in Kingston, Peter Tosh continued to record for Leslie Kong, trying also to earn money to start the new label. Under the name Peter Touch he released several unmemorable songs, including 'Selassie Serenade', 'The Return Of Al Capone' and 'Sun Valley'.

When Bob's plane landed at the Kingston airport in the autumn of 1969, he wasn't much wealthier than when he had left earlier in the year. The money he had managed to save went to support Rita and the children, and the rental of a small house on First Street in Trench Town where the Wailers could get together and rehearse. But he returned creatively refreshed, with new songs and ideas. Almost immediately the Wailers started a new collaboration, one that would galvanize Jamaican music within the coming year. The Wailers' new producer and co-writer was an old friend from their days with Coxsone, a tiny wizard of a sound engineer who went by the usual roll-call of nicknames – Upsetter, Little, Scratch.

His real name was Lee Perry.

Born in Kingston in 1939, Lee Perry went to work for Coxsone Dodd when he was twenty holding auditions and rehearsals at Dodd's Downbeat Record Shop on Orange Street before Coxsone built his studio. Prior to that he had worked on Coxsone's sound system in the days of the wars with sonic rivals Duke Reid and Prince Buster. One of his first productions for Coxsone was 'Six And Seven Books' by Toots and the Maytals, a wild fusion of jumping 1961 ska and the fervour of a prayer meeting. Perry continued working for Dodd until about the time the Wailers left in late 1967. Like many of the artists, Perry felt that Dodd had failed to compensate him adequately for his work, although he acknowledged that his apprenticeship with Sir Coxsone had given him an invaluable education.

In the late 1960s Lee Perry was the baddest maverick in Jamaican music, and he combined an extremely Rude attitude with brilliant new rhythms and eccentric African-sounding percussion. Styling himself 'the Upsetter' and dearly wanting to upset Coxsone's dominant position on the scene, the elfin Perry expressed his rage with singles like 'Run For Cover' and 'Return Of Django', whose slow, sinister beat left a definite menace in the hearts of his listeners. Perry's music exploded

with new ideas. One single, 'People Funny Boy', is credited by some scholars as the record that literally gave birth to the reggae beat. Perry claimed that the inspiration for his hard new sound came from the late-night services at a Trench Town Pocomania church, the Afro-Jamaican revivalist sect whose breathy religious shuffle encourages spirit possession among the faithful.

'At the same time,' Perry says, 'me want to upset Downbeat [Coxsone], upset him technically. And all the others too. 'Cos they were all doing something same all the way, alla dem just go *ska-aska-ska-aska*. And when the people hear what I-man do to them, they hear a different beat, a slower beat, a waxy beat, like you stepping in glue. And dem hear a different bass, a rebel bass, coming at you like sticking a gun.

'Me knew Wailers from Downbeat days, of course, and when dem come a-see Downbeat, dem a-come and see me, and Jackie Mittoo, and we help them with music and recordin'. But then when Bob drop into my hands, him really take on the power of music now. Bob rebirth . . . it was a different level for him completely. As Bob a-come out of my session, was when him roots manners start, because my rhythm fresh, a harder type of thing, and nothing else could carry Wailers more than dem kind of beat and that kind of feeling. I the right man to go with their kind of soul. Is there me show dem see what to sing and how to do it.'

Working with Bob, Bunny and Peter in the back room of his Upsetter Records shop at the corner of Beeston Street and Luke Lane, Perry completely recast the basic Wailers' sounds. Bob's lead vocals were transformed into something more urgent and raw, devoid of pretence and smooth edges. Out went the old-fashioned Wailers doo-wop harmonies, to be replaced by terse but melodious back-up parts. Perry dropped horn sections from the Wailers' music, as well as every trace of Kong-style frothy reggae bounce. Now the dark and primitive bass was the lead instrument, offset by the metronomic chop of electric guitar. Palpitating with this dread new bass warfare, the Wailers' music became *evil* again, tough as nails, as in the days of 'Rude Boy' and 'Rule This Land'.

Much of the credit for the Wailers' powerful creative surge must go to Perry's élite young studio band, the Upsetters, the nucleus of which, the two Barrett brothers, would eventually merge with the Wailers to create the best reggae band in the world. The key to the Upsetters was Aston Francis Barrett, born in Kingston in 1946, called 'Family Man' or just 'Fams' for his prowess at fathering large numbers of children, and his younger brother Carly, born Carlton Lloyd Barrett in 1950.

Together, the Barrett brothers developed a stupefying rhythm harmony sound, a driving, percussive harmonic counterpart to the Wailers' strong vocal harmonies. In 1975, Family Man recalled how he became the Wailers' 'melodic superintendent':

'I build my own bass. I don't go to school you know, no one teach I. I build one out of board and put on four guitar string.' Working with his brother Carly's automatic sense of time, Family Man developed fast as a musician. 'I really take it serious in sixty-eight. Two week hard practice and the third week a band, the fourth I go studio.' (The Barretts' first session was for 'Watch This Sound', which Jimmy Riley recorded with Slim Smith in a group called the Uniques; it was a big hit in 1968 for Winston Lo's Tramp label.)

'The first little group,' Family Man continues, 'we call it the Hippy Boys, that was a road band. Studio-wise we were the Upsetters. My brother Carly was in it, and Alva Lewis guitar, and Glen Adams keyboard. That was the four who toured in 1969. Within them times we do studio work yunno. Well, we was the only group capable enough to back Wailers. "My Cup" and "Conqueror" and all dem things . . . Bob is the leader of the Wailers, and I am the leader of the musical part of the group. The Wailers was the best vocal group and I group was the best little backing band at the time, so we say, why don't we just come together and smash the world.'

And they did.

The Wailers/Lee Perry/Upsetters sessions were held at Studio 17, Perry's record shop, during the last months of 1969 and on through 1970. Many partisans of the Wailers still feel that these recordings are the best the band ever made. The new songs reaffirmed the band's status of Rude shamans and soul rebels, spokesmen for a generation of Jamaicans.

Hanging out at Upsetter Records, Bob, Peter and Bunny talked music with Lee Perry, drank fish tea, built countless spliffs, ate roast fish and cornbread. Perry wanted the Wailers to record exclusively for his Upsetter label; but Bob still badly wanted a label of his own. Two of the earliest Perry/Wailers collaborations, 'Duppy Conqueror' and 'Who's Mr Brown', were released as singles in Jamaica on the fledgling Tuff Gong label, backed with their respective dubs – the rhythm tracks of the recordings with the vocals dubbed out so local DJs could boast and toast to the rhythms at sound-system dances. The label was named after Bob's street handle in Trench Town. Mindful of what happened to the group's earlier venture, when Jamaican radio refused to play the discs because they didn't have proper labels on them, Bob asked a friend named Guy Coombs, who designed handbills for local adver-

tisers, to do a label for the new company. Coombs recalls that he drew up the early Tuff Gong label and had the first batch printed at his own expense, because Bob was broke and he wanted to help the group. The labels were simple: 'Tuff Gong – a Wailin' Soul production'. Half the label was left blank so that song titles could be written in by hand. Today, Coombs remembers Bob as 'someone who showed heavy discipline at all times. He was never talkative, and even when you talked to him, most times he never cared to talk back. He always preferred more to sing than to talk, and always had his guitar.' When the label's second single was issued, Coombs designed and printed some handouts, similar to the dance announcements that were passed out all over the city. One side of the card was a picture of the group, Bob on the left, Peter in the middle, Bunny on the right, wearing T-shirts, and very short haircuts. The caption read: 'Here Comes Bob Marley and the Wailing Wailers.' The reverse hopefully touted 'Who's Mr Brown', proclaiming it 'a sure hit'.

Unfortunately, Tuff Gong Records quickly sank back into the same morass that had consumed Wailin' Soul: no radio airplay, no distribution, no money. Bob later dismissed the near rise and fall of Tuff Gong with: 'The Wailers came forward again, but we couldn't hold a groove.'

So, still with Lee Perry, they began to record for Upsetter Records, a relationship that lasted until 1978. Perhaps the reason the collaboration was so successful was that the scrappy, jabbering Scratch Perry was such a good foil for the reticent, moody Marley. While Bob strummed and brooded, Perry would croak out catch-phrases and doggerel, trying to find the right lyrics to match the spluttering, bumpity Afro-style percussion tracks that the Barretts were experimenting with. Perry seemed slightly demented to outsiders, with his alternative astral identities fuelled by copious amounts of white rum and ganja, but he was also a witty and imaginative lyricist who contributed immeasurably to the great records the Wailers made with him. As to who actually wrote the songs (Bob or Scratch – Peter's and Bunny's songs are unmistakably their own), confusion still reigns. The early Upsetter/Wailers releases credited most of the songs to Lee Perry. When the same songs were later released on albums in Britain, some of them were credited to Bob Marley or sometimes to 'R. Marley'. Most likely, they were written by both men and the band, improvising in the studio. Trying to clear the matter up, a reporter asked Perry in 1977 about the songs he wrote with Bob. Who wrote what? 'That part now, me no wanna discuss,' Scratch said. 'Because we have work to perform and me and him live too close like a brother. These are minor problem,

something between me and him and I don't think anyone should get involved in that. Is a me and him problem, so let we solve it.'

'Duppy Conqueror', 'Small Axe', 'Stand Alone', 'Don't Rock My Boat' – these seem even more singular when isolated from their times. In 1969 Jimmy Cliff's 'Wonderful World Beautiful People' was a hit record all over the world, as Desmond Dekker's 'Israelites' had been to a lesser extent in 1968. The dominant sound in the Caribbean was definitely James Brown, Soul Brother Number One, with his epileptic squawks and insane, pleading declarations of love. In America, though, James Brown was fading fast, and Sly and the Family Stone and Jimi Hendrix were on the ascendant, not pleading for mercy any more. 'Duppy Conqueror' was written jointly by Bob and Perry, and describes the quiet exultation of the released prisoner, feelings Bob knew well from his own prison term: '*Yes me friend/Dem set me free again/Yes me friend/Me deh pan street again/The bars could not hold me/ Force could not control me/ They try to keep me down/But Jah put I around.*' He sings that he must make a pilgrimage to Mount Zion, and that nothing will stop him, '*If you are a bull-bucker/Well let me tell you/I'm a duppy conqueror.*'

In 1969 and the following year, when 'Duppy Conqueror' was popular, the term 'duppy conqueror' generally implied a wizard, someone so bad that even duppies are afraid. But in speaking in the voice of a prisoner, the Wailers were making a subtle political point in the song. If duppies are the wandering souls of the dishonoured or disinterred dead, so can the iniquitous Jamaican judicial system be seen as a duppy, as a malevolent spirit from the tormented, rotting corpse of Jamaican history. Here now the duppy conqueror is no mere criminal, but a shamanically resurrected victim who lives in Jah's grace and cannot be suppressed by injustice.

A similar point was made by another Perry/Marley song, 'Small Axe', which on its surface seemed to be a warning to the colonial powers, with imagery lifted directly from the Old Testment: '*Why boasteth thyself, oh evil men?/Playing smart without being clever/I say you're working iniquity to achieve vanity/But the goodness of Jah-Jah I-ndureth for I-ver/If you are a big big tree/We are a small axe/Sharpened to cut you down/Ready to cut you down.*' In fact the song referred to more immediate issues concerning the group. When the Wailers originally merged with Lee Perry, Upsetter Records was facing competition from the 'big three' studios in Kingston – Federal, Studio One, and Dynamic. One day Bob and Peter and Scratch were playing with lyrics at the Upsetter shop and Scratch was complaining about the 'big t'ree'. Brash and boasty as usual, Tosh spoke up: 'If dem is the big t'ree, we am the small axe!' And one of the canniest double-entendres in reggae music was born.

'Small Axe' was irresistible because it threatened with both obeah and the Bible: '*These are the words of my master/Telling me that no weak heart shall prosper/And whosoever diggeth a pit/Shall fall in it.*' And Scratch's wicked, clicking polyrhythms gave the music even more of a voodoo edge, like a Jamaican myal priest exorcizing demons.

The earliest sessions for Perry produced several new songs and a handful of remakes. 'Mr Brown' was another version of 'Who's Mr Brown', originally the sequel to 'Duppy Conqueror'. Laced with ominous rattles and ghoulish crackling, 'Mr Brown' was an aural horror show: '*Mr Brown is a clown who rides through town in a coffin,*' a duppy who '*upsets the town*' from Mandeville to Sligoville. 'My Cup' was a more old-fashioned Wailers song about suffering. The cup was the singer's eyes, brimming with tears, the main lubricant of Wailer imagery: '*Yes I've got to cry, cry, cry.*'

'Corner Stone' hit a really rocking groove, and took its theme from the Psalms, often the wellspring of Bob Marley's lyrics: '*The stone that the builder refuse/Will always be the head corner stone/Cos the things people refuse/Are the things they should use.*' (The lines are borrowed from Psalm 118: 22–3.) But in 'Corner Stone' Bob's spiritual intent is peripheral; what he really wants is some love: '*You are the builder baby/And I am a builder's stone.*' Ten years later, the same potent builder/stone imagery would surface again in 'Ride Natty Ride'.

Among the older Wailers' songs recreated by Lee Perry were Peter's 'No Sympathy', now much more sinister; 'Rebel's Hop', a remake of 'Rude Boy' with new verses and more actively rebellious now than Rude, and 'Soul Rebel', which had been recorded for Danny Sims. The newer songs included 'Try Me', a seductive challenge in the form of a harmony chant; 'No Water', which captured folk sayings with lewd intentions: '*No water can quench my thirst/I'm in bed, get me a nurse/Do ya understand me baby?*'; 'Reaction,' a lesson in social physics warning that for '*Every little action/There's a reaction*'; and 'Souls Almighty' a goofy slice of proto-reggae in which Bob intones: '*Funky funky chicken/Mash potato/Do the alligator/Let's do it together . . .*'

From the second series of recordings with Perry, rather more important songs emerged – 'Small Axe', 'Lively Up Yourself', 'Kaya', '400 Years' and several other Wailers staples appeared in early 1970. 'Kaya' was particularly significant, for at that time herb culture was beginning to predominate among Jamaican artists, and in response the basic beat slowed down into classical reggae time so both players and dancers wouldn't have to exert themselves. 'Kaya' is a Rasta term for ganja, and the feeling of being high on herb, 'feelin' Irie-I' is ingeniously combined with chanting visions of rain and falling skies.

The effect is pure, colourful musical impressionism. 'Lively Up Yourself' was an anthem of unity and dancing with knock-out harmonies, Bob exhorting his people that reggae is another bag, with a blistering horn solo, probably from Tommy McCook. '400 Years' contained polemics that Jamaicans had come to expect from Peter Tosh: '*400 years 400 years 400 years/And my people/They still can't see/Why do they fight against the youths of today/Without the youth, they all go astray*.' As usual, Tosh was the least circumspect of the Wailers, the least afraid of provoking repressive measures by Jamaican authorities.

Some of Bob Marley's most passionate and transcendent love songs came out of these sessions as well. 'Don't Rock My Boat' might be the best example of the synthesis of Bob's subdued but lusty soul singing and the Barretts' patented trance groove. Family Man's utterly *pelvic* bass line cushioned the sensual pillow-talk of the lyric, with Bob telling his lover how happy he is, '*happy inside all the time*'. 'Stand Alone' is sadder in tone, a gentle song about the pain of reconciling lovers: '*Here you are/Crying again/And your loveliness/Won't cover your shame*'. The song is a lacework of hidden meanings and indecipherable lines, and displays a strong hint of the paternalistic attitude Bob maintained towards the women in his life.

In addition to new versions of 'Put It On', delivered in the heartbeat tempo of *burru* drumming, which dressed the original Rude Boy spiritual in Rastafarian robes, and 'Keep On Moving', a harmonic *tour de force* adapted from a Curtis Mayfield song, the Wailers cut several new tunes. 'Fussing And Fighting' was hard reggae-rock, a plea for peace among warring ghetto factions. 'Sun is Shining' is a very weird dance poem, acid reggae, with a melodica accompaniment that adds a surreal touch to lyrics that seem psychedelic in their looseness and high spirits. 'Brain Washing' is a very poignant Bunny Livingston condemnation of the Mother Goose nursery rhymes, which Rastafarians considered contaminated by Babylonian mythology and witchcraft: '*Is just old brain-washing/Coming through for poor man's child*.' One of the cleverest of Perry's recordings is called 'All In One', which is a medley of the Wailers' greatest hits up to 1969 – 'Bend Down Low', 'Nice Time', 'One Love', 'Simmer Down', 'It Hurts To Be Alone', 'Lonesome Feeling', 'Love And Affection', 'Put It On' and 'Duppy Conqueror', all seamlessly translated into one three-minute track. In 'African Herbsman' the Wailers as observant Rastafarians are evident as Bob paraphrases the lyric of Richie Havens' song. Calling himself a 'retired slaveman', Bob calls on his brother the African herbsman to retrieve him from the clutches of Babylon: *African herbsman/Seize your time/And take this illusion/From the edge of my mind*.

The best of the Upsetter/Wailers sessions was released in Jamaica and England during 1970 and 1971 on the Upsetter label. 'My Cup', 'Duppy Conqueror' and 'Small Axe' were minor hits. But it wasn't until the release of the stupendous 'Trench Town Rock' during the summer of 1971 that the Wailers again came to the top in Jamaica.

5 · REGGAE ON BROADWAY

We know and we understand/Almighty God is a living man/. . ./And now we've seen the light/We gonna stand up for our rights (from 'Get Up Stand Up')

As the new decade began, the Wailers were in limbo. The best work of their Lee Perry sessions was yet to be released; their old harmony style was *passé*, and the group was broke.

Early in 1970, Danny Sims and Johnny Nash liquidated their record business in Jamaica, and Nash accepted an offer to act in and score a movie being shot in Sweden, where Nash's Jamaican-produced records, 'Hold Me Tight' and 'Cupid', had been big hits. Nash and Sims invited Bob Marley along to help with the soundtrack, and Bob decided to go. On his way to Sweden he took Rita and the children to Wilmington to live with Cedella. For the next year Rita worked in a Delaware hospital as a nurse. Just before he left for England, on his mother's advice, Bob had his hair cut.

While Bob was in Europe, the rest of the Wailers stayed in Kingston. Under the direction of Lee Perry, they recorded behind various lead singers: 'Peter Touch', Ras Dawkins, and Lee Perry himself in a molten extravaganza called 'Son Of Thunder', which Perry released as the flip side of 'My Cup'. The Wailers/Upsetters rhythm section, the Barrett brothers, also found work in a short-lived group called the Youth Professionals, assembled by a local club-owner as the house band for his sleazy nightspot. The Youth Professionals included a very young but extremely talented keyboard player named Tyrone Downie.

Tyrone, born in 1956, was raised in the Victoria neighbourhood, not far from Vineyard Town and the Catholic cathedral on North Street. It was an area that produced some of Jamaica's best piano-players and footballers. Tyrone was raised by his mother, Gwendoline Edwards, a strict Christian, and sent to Kingston College, an Anglican school.

Somebody gave Tyrone a harmonica, and he quickly became addicted to music. He enlisted in the cadet band and used to sneak into the school's chapel after hours and play the organ. When he got caught, he was caned. By the time he was thirteen, Tyrone was playing the piano in church and had started to build a reputation in an area already full of hot players like Jackie Mittoo and Augustus Pablo. One day a local club-owner named Charlie came to the school gate and gave a classmate two shillings to bring Tyrone to see him. When Tyrone came out, the man told him that Tyrone's friend Horace Swaby (otherwise Augustus Pablo) had been spreading the word that Tyrone could really play. Charlie asked Tyrone to work in the band in his new club. Since Tyrone was only fourteen, he took the club-owner home to meet his mother and ask her permission. When Gwendoline Edwards was assured that Tyrone would only play at the weekends and that his schooling would not be interrupted, she gave her consent.

Charlie then took the young teenager over to his club to show Tyrone his new instrument – a new Farfisa 5 electric organ. The Farfisa is the cheapest, cheesiest-sounding keyboard available, and in time Tyrone would grow to be one of the most sophisticated synthesizer players in modern music. But in 1970 the Farfisa 5 seemed 'like a spaceship'. He began to experiment, and within a few days mastered everything the instrument could play.

But Tyrone was intimidated when he first met his fellow Youth Professionals. Family Man and Carly Barrett, the pulse of the Upsetters, were the *hardest* rhythm section in Kingston. Although ten years older, Family Man made Tyrone feel at ease, and shared his knowledge with him. When the Youth Professionals began to build a local reputation, Charlie, the Syrian club-owner, wanted the band to work weeknights as well. Tyrone was making money, and told his mother he wanted to leave school. 'She was disappointed,' he remembers with a wry touch in his deep voice. 'She thought I had a brain.'

Now Tyrone became the protegé of Family Man and hung out with his family at Pembroke Hall on the north-west outskirts of Kingston. Family Man told Tyrone about the Wailers and the big plans the group would hatch when Bob came back from Sweden. Family even hinted that Tyrone might one day become part of those plans. Tyrone was flattered beyond belief, and gained a great deal of confidence from Family Man, of whom Tyrone says: 'He's a very serious person. If he doesn't know you, he doesn't want to deal with you.'

In Stockholm, during the winter and spring of 1970, Bob Marley was cold. Most of the time he stuck close to his hotel and worked on songs

for Nash's soundtrack, collaborating with Nash's Texan keyboard player, John 'Rabbit' Bundrick. Bob also spent time with two African hand-drummers who played on the soundtrack sessions, Remi 'Rebop' Kwaku Baah and Coffee, talking about Africa and smoking small amounts of hashish.

Before leaving Sweden, Bob Marley accompanied Johnny Nash and his back-up band, Rabbit and the Jungles, on a short tour of Swedish cities, where Nash's Jamaican-style records had been popular. With the tour over and the soundtrack finished (neither film nor record would ever be released) Nash and his entourage decamped for London, where Danny Sims was trying to secure a record deal for Nash with the British branch of CBS. When the deal was signed, Bob was joined in London by the rest of the Wailers – Peter, Bunny and the Barrett brothers. The Wailers thought they were coming to support Nash on a tour of England, but instead they found themselves living in a seedy hotel in Bayswater with no way to cook their own food, rehearsing by day in a basement belonging to a company called Rondor Music, in Surrey. The band was extremely unhappy with the squalid living and working conditions, and Peter and Bunny complained constantly. Bob too was angry, but was less inclined to complain since Danny was trying to get Bob a recording deal with CBS as well.

Early in 1971 the Wailers went into the CBS studio at Soho Square to cut some backing tracks for Nash's forthcoming album. Among the songs they worked on were Nash's 'I Can See Clearly Now' and four numbers by Bob Marley: 'Stir It Up', 'Guava Jelly', 'Comma Comma' and 'You Poured Sugar On Me'. Since the music was meant for international soul fans and not the Jamaican reggae audience, the tracks were polite and somewhat subdued, arranged by Rabbit Bundrick. But at the same sessions the band recorded a tune of Bob's that Sims hoped to sell to CBS as a single. The song, 'Reggae On Broadway', was a rock-hard rhythm chant, unlike anything Bob had cut before. Despite the dancing, upbeat vibe, there was something sad and frantic about the song, as if recalling the feelings of exile and ambition described by the Drifters' 'On Broadway', which had been a hit ten years earlier. Reggae was indeed on Broadway, but the Wailers were penniless and homesick in London.

In the spring the Wailers returned to Jamaica to record, while Sims and Nash remained in London to oversee the production of Nash's album. The group began working almost immediately at Dynamic Sound and at a comfortable new studio built by producer Harry Johnson on Roosevelt Road. They were scheduled to return to England in the same autumn to support Nash on a British tour.

During the next four months the Wailers cut dozens of new songs that signalled many artistic changes in the band. They were energized by some important new musicians and a new manager, Alan 'Skill' Cole, Jamaica's finest young soccer star, who became a close friend of Bob's, sharing all his Rasta enthusiasm and love of herb and football. Bob asked Skill to help the band produce some local recordings and to take care of business in Kingston, allowing the Wailers to lean on Skill's prestige as an athlete of national stature.

Their old keyboard player from Lee Perry's Upsetter sessions, Glen Adams, had emigrated to New York, and the Wailers began to think of a replacement. The keyboardist then on the band's recording sessions was the fifteen-year-old former Youth Professional, Tyrone Downie. 'So from the Youth Professional gig,' Tyrone recalls, 'I'm a musician now, right? So being a musician, you get curious. You listen to records, you love records, artists and musicians. You want to know who plays on the records, and the only way to know is go downtown and look, because they're all there. So I'd go and hang out at different record shops to find out what was really happening.

'Bob's shop wasn't called Tuff Gong then; it had another name, Soul Shack. A real small shack in an alley back of Joe Gibbs' studio, next door to a little food shop. They sold records, Afro-picks carved by Peter, anything to do with soul 'cos then it was still the soul era, black and proud and all that. One day I saw the shop, and Rita was at the counter, and I said to myself, wah! This is where Bob Marley and dem is.

'Rita called me into the shop and gave me a mango; she was so nice that I was surprised, I'm just a likkle school guy and alla dat. But I was afraid to go into the shop because I knew there wasn't anybody my age or any real young person working at recordin' then.

'Bob confirmed that for me when he arrived. He looked at me and said, "Wha you doin' here? Gwan back to school. Gwan home." But he said it nice, as if me mother would be worried about me. So I said "Waaah," yunno, and left. But the vibe at the shop was so great for musicians that I kept going back and hanging around.'

One day the Wailers gathered at the Soul Shack to rehearse a new song which the band was going to record. By then, Tyrone had played a couple of sessions for star producer Bunny Lee (most notably Carl Dawkin's 'Walk a Little Prouder'), and was hanging around the Wailers, waiting for a chance now that Glen Adams was gone. Family Man beckoned him into the studio, and told Bob that the nervous boy was a former Youth Professional. From then on, Tyrone says, Bob was cool. Adding to Tyrone's appeal was the fact that he was happy to play

for free. 'I was young then,' Tyrone says, 'I didn't care about money, and was always ready to play with the Wailers. I was like their groupie!'

The first tune Tyrone played on was one of the first the Wailers cut that year, 'Lick Samba', produced by Bob with Lee Perry engineering. Not long after that, the Wailers recorded a song that Bob had begun to develop as early as 1967, during his retreat to the hills of St Ann. When it was released in the early summer of 1971, 'Trench Town Rock' tore up Jamaica, defining ghetto residents as the righteous and outsiders as . . . *outsiders*. For young Jamaicans, the lilting melody, pulsating 'riddim' and proud language redrew the invisible boundaries between 'dem' and 'us'. The song was number one in Jamaica for the next five months, and it turned Bob Marley into a national hero.

In a time when slum culture and music represented the only freedom of expression offered to poor people 'Trench Town Rock' made an enormous contribution to the attitudes that would soon change Jamaica. In confirming and validating the Trench Town experience, the Wailers were seen internationally as spokesmen of the Jamaican poor. It was an honour they would never lose.

Bunny later said, ' "Trench Town Rock" is the tune that made us *really* start to search.' After it had been released, they could never return to easy songs of love and romance. 'We were now gone into a twelfth dimension,' Peter Tosh said. A contemporary magazine in Trinidad observed the Wailers as 'three musicians struggling to unearth the inner feelings of the Kingstonian man in the street, through the media of rock-steady, reggae and their own unique, as yet unnamed, beat. It might be food for thought for non-Jamaicans to take a lesson or two from West Indians who refuse to bow to imported acid rock and the omnipresent Motown sound and fight off the commercialism and artistic prostitution which this obeisance can easily breed in a people not yet free from the colonial yoke.'

The Wailers were suddenly in demand for recordings and stage shows, and with this new notoriety came enough cash for Bob and Rita to abandon their Soul Shack record shop and establish Tuff Gong Records, first on the Parade, and later on King Street. With Lee Perry busy releasing some of the records he had previously cut with the Wailers, Bob decided to crank up his Tuff Gong Productions to meet the demand for new Wailers music. Recording at various studios the Wailers began to produce an enormous amount of new material. After the 'Lick Samba' session, they recorded 'Midnight Ravers', 'Craven Choke Puppy' (a sharp riffing vocal in true reggae rhythm), 'Satisfy My Soul' (a hypnotic meditation on power and the powerless), 'Redder Than Red' ('Red' meaning high on herb), 'Mr Chatterbox' for producer

Bunny Lee, Peter Tosh's 'Stop That Train' and 'Burial' (also called 'Funeral'), and a pair of Rasta gospel songs by Bunny, 'This Train' and 'Dreamland', the last a passionate tune about a Utopian Africa.

Among other Wailers sessions recorded in the summer of 1971 were a new version of 'Guava Jelly,' produced by Skill Cole, and a new song, 'Screwface,' scolding complainers and nay-sayers in general. Also cut were several songs intended for a Bob Marley album if the already recorded 'Reggae On Broadway' was a hit in England. These included a follow-up, 'Dance Do The Reggae'; new versions of two older ballads, 'Chances Are' and 'Mellow Mood'; two interesting pieces ('Stay With Me' and 'Gonna Get You') by other songwriters under contract to Danny Sims; and a devastating new song written by Bob, 'Hurting Inside', which laid bare the memories of a man who had once been lost and abandoned: *When I was just a little child/Happiness was there a while/And from me it slipped one day/Happiness come back I say/Cos if you don't come/I'm gonna go lookin'/For happiness/Cos I'm hurting inside.*

Bob's was a hectic life in those times. Days were full of recording and strenuous exercise under Skill Cole's discipline. Nights were devoted to communal I-tal meals, composing and rehearsing. Because the work was so hard and the rewards few when compared to the fabled riches of international rock stars, there were bound to be tensions within the group, involving the usual issues: leadership, direction, songs and money. The Wailers had been together for ten years since the early rehearsals in Joe Higgs' yard. Though they sensed an impending breakthrough, the frustrations of low cash-flow and lack of recognition took their toll within the group. Long periods passed when Bob and Bunny wouldn't speak to each other, and the dispute would be settled through the mediation of friends. Peter Tosh was frustrated when Bob's songs rather than his own took priority during precious studio time.

During the summer of 1971, Bob Marley's political life began to heat up. An informal alliance was being forged then between the Wailers and the People's National Party that would continue for years. The political scene had been relatively placid for some years; the Jamaica Labour Party had rather sleepily governed Jamaica in the decade following Independence. Little had happened since the riots and turmoil of the late 1960s, and the government remained repressive and unabashedly neo-colonial. Jamaica was run by lazy bureaucrats for the benefit of the middle classes and the old planting and mercantile families. An easy tropical life for relatively few people was still being supported by an enormous pool of cheap black labour.

With a general election announced for 1972 the opposition PNP began

a campaign to capture Jamaica for socialism. Leading the fight was the party's candidate for prime minister, Michael Manley, a charismatic union leader who was the son of the party's founder and the island's prime minister during the last years of the British rule. Michael Manley was not only an able leader and a master orator, he carried with him palpable moral authority as well, especially for young Rastas like Bob Marley. It was Michael Manley who, on a visit to Ethiopia, had invited Emperor Haile Selassie to make his state visit to Jamaica in 1966. When he arrived, Selassie presented Michael Manley with his imperial staff, as a present. For the Rastas it was a sign. The Emperor had chosen. The staff was dubbed the 'Rod of Correction', and when Manley brandished it in the air during his months of campaigning in the Jamaican hill villages, people would whoop with awe. 'Joshua stick!' they would call. They saw in him a modern Joshua, following the footsteps of his Mosaic father, Norman Washington Manley, who had led the nation to independence.

Ten years later, Michael Manley would recall how he was first influenced by the Wailers. 'I first knew Bob Marley in 1971, in the days of "Trench Town Rock". At this stage his music was still visceral protest carried on the wings of a relatively uncomplicated commentary on the ghetto. Throughout that year, he performed as part of a group of artists who travelled all over Jamaica with me while the party which I led prepared for the general elections of 1972. Until that time, my own political perceptions had reflected a mutually reinforcing marriage. On the one hand, there was the political theory which I had absorbed from my father as a youth and had developed into explicit socialist doctrine as a student in university. On the other hand, were some twenty years as an organizer and negotiator with the Jamaican trade union movement. To this was now added a vital and new ingredient. I could never pretend that the lyrics of the protest music which were the driving motivation of reggae taught me things that I did not know. From an intellectual point of view, they were confirmatory of all that I believed as a socialist, and have struggled against as a trade unionist. But I had not myself been born in the ghetto and was not personally part of that experience. Reggae music influenced me profoundly by deepening the element of emotional comprehension.'

For several weeks Bob and Rita joined the PNP Musical Bandwagon, playing from the back of a flatbed truck. Bob played guitar and sang, and when Rita was along she harmonized. Although Rastafarian purists were shunning the elections and politics in general as the devil's work, Bob Marley had been impressed by Michael Manley's leadership, his ability to sympathize with and speak to the common Jamaican, and his

Ethiopianism. Some people said that when Manley and socialism took over in Jamaica, herb would be legalized and the repression of Rasta as an alternative religion would cease. When Bob finally jumped off the PNP Musical Bandwagon – the group was committed to return to England – he was optimistic that things in Jamaica were about to change.

In the autumn of 1971 Bob Marley and the Wailers flew to London. Johnny Nash's album, *I Can See Clearly Now*, with four songs by Bob, had been released and was beginning to climb the British charts. It looked like a smash hit. Danny Sims wanted to sign Bob Marley to British CBS and rush-release 'Reggae On Broadway' to coincide with Nash's soft-core Jamaican sound. So the Wailers prepared to winter in London, with Bunny complaining about the cold, Peter complaining about Danny Sims, and Bob looking hopefully to the future. He was determined to see his career take off, no matter what the sacrifice. The Wailers were again installed in the seedy, inexpensive hotel in Bayswater where they had stayed earlier in the year. They rehearsed and worked on songs during the day, and spent the evenings pub-crawling with Johnny Nash and Danny Sims, checking the action at black clubs in South London like the A Train and Mr Bee's in Peckham. They made contact with young fans in London's large West Indian community and, like thousands of Jamaican immigrants before them, began to feel more at home in Britain.

With Johnny Nash's 'I Can See Clearly Now' firmly at the top of the British charts, Bunny became increasingly impatient and angry at having to sit back and wait while a black Yankee like Nash appropriated the Jamaican idiom and was making money with it. In part to placate Bunny, Danny Sims hired a black Londoner from Trinidad, Brent Clarke, to be the Wailers' manager in London. The first thing Clarke did was to move them out of their hotel and into a small semi-detached house in Neasden, with separate bedrooms and a kitchen where the group could prepare food that was more familiar to them than the greasy fish and chips and Indian cooking on which the Rasta I-talists had been barely subsisting. Immediately the band's morale improved, and they began attracting other young black musicians and the subculture of girls, herbsmen and hangers-on that supported the scene. Bob and Peter adapted quickly to London life, acquiring local girlfriends and enjoying their stature as brave soul rebels among the restive black youth of Notting Hill and Brixton. But Bunny was unhappy in England and remained withdrawn and meditative, reading the Bible and pining for Jean Watt, the beautiful woman who was waiting for him back in Jamaica.

By the end of 1971 Nash's *I Can See Clearly Now* album was number one all over the world. Nash and Sims had retooled the basic tracks recorded earlier in the year for the four songs Bob Marley had written for the album. 'Stir It Up' now sounded over-produced to Bob, cluttered with horns, flutes and mushy string arrangements. 'Guava Jelly' was a little less antiseptic, with Rabbit Bundrick's organ vamps and an aggressive, suggestive lyric. Another Marley song, 'You Poured Sugar On Me', used the same chords as 'Guava Jelly' and Bundrick's swelling organ to build an inoffensive ballad, while 'Comma Comma' came off as easy-listening reggae, refined, polite, definitely not dangerous. Thanks in part to Bob Marley, Johnny Nash's sagging career had been given a huge boost.

Bob Marley's own single, 'Reggae On Broadway', although simultaneously released by CBS, was a complete failure. Nobody in Nash's large audience knew what real reggae was; nobody knew how to dance to the beat. CBS was devoting its promotional energies to Johnny Nash, and Bob was ignored; in all, the record sold about three thousand copies. In an attempt to expand Nash's audience and find one for Marley, Sims convinced CBS to finance a three-week tour in November and December. For eighteen days Johnny Nash and Bob Marley toured seventy-two secondary schools, playing four schools per day. The shows consisted of fifteen minutes of Bob's music, then fifteen minutes of Nash, followed by half an hour of questions. Although Bob was not wearing Rasta dreadlocks at that point, he spent much of his time telling the students about Haile Selassie and the repatriation of blacks to Africa.

When the exhausting road trip had finished Bob Marley, according to Danny Sims, was as popular in England as Johnny Nash. But 'Reggae On Broadway' still failed to take off. Then Sims and Nash flew to New York to try to rescue Nash's album, which had stalled in America without their attention, and with Danny Sims gone, the Wailers were without visible means of support. Their passports were held by the Home Office over a dispute concerning the group's lack of work permits. They had no cash, no work, and no return tickets to Jamaica. The thick English winter was upon them, Bunny was miserable, the group desperate.

In December 1971, Bob Marley played what he thought was the Wailers' last card. He walked into the Basing Street studios of Island Records and asked to see the boss, Chris Blackwell.

At that point, Chris Blackwell was probably the only person in the record business in a position to help Bob Marley and the Wailers. Not only was the young Anglo-Jamaican the proprietor of the hottest

independent record company in the world, but he had been following the Wailers' progress from a distance, and harboured a shrewd, instinctive knowledge of the group's strengths and weaknesses. Eventually he would emerge as interpreter and translator of Bob Marley's prophetic music to the world at large.

Blackwell was born in London in 1937. His Irish father was distantly related to the family that had founded Crosse and Blackwell, and his mother was a Lindo, one of Jamaica's most esteemed Jewish families, descended from Sephardic refugees who had fled in the 1600s from the cruelties of the Spanish Inquisition. Once in Jamaica, the Jewish merchant families emerged as middlemen between the buccaneers plying their trade on the Spanish Main and the British Crown, which purchased most of the pirate loot. In the late 1700s the Lindo family had become wealthy through selling rum and sugar, and were cattle ranchers on a vast scale.

Six months after his birth, Blackwell was taken to Jamaica to be raised in the Lindos' enormous mansion on Waterloo Road, Kingston's most prestigious suburb. The house was called Terra Nova, a tropical fantasy of open verandahs and formal reception rooms, stately gardens and a large azure swimming pool. The window of Chris' room on the second floor had a spectacular view of the mountains overlooking the plain of Kingston. Here he grew up almost alone, a sickly, asthmatic child with few friends and a secretive imagination.

When he was ten, Blackwell was sent back to England for his education. Four years later he was sent to Harrow. He left in 1955, when he was seventeen, and returned to Jamaica, finished with his formal education. But the rich young Blackwell soon found himself back in London, sent by his family to learn accountancy at Price Waterhouse so that he could eventually return to Jamaica and enter the Lindos' business world. Blackwell lasted only a few months as an accountant; instead he studied professional gambling. He played bridge, poker and blackjack in London clubs, laid bets at Newbury and Ascot and on the greyhounds at White City and Wembley. Later on, he would say that his years at gambling were a better education than the years at Harrow. It was at the racetrack that Blackwell discovered the value of money, at the betting tables of London clubs where he learned to bluff, negotiate and win – essential skills for the shady world of the recording business.

In 1958 Blackwell returned to Jamaica and took up slightly more legitimate pursuits. He worked as aide-de-camp to Sir Hugh Foot, the British Governor-General of Jamaica, and sold real estate. Later he taught water-skiing at a resort near Montego Bay, on Jamaica's north

coast. When he stopped enjoying whatever he was doing, he quit. He was a playboy in the garden of Eden.

A few years previously Blackwell had made his first contact with the people usually shunned and feared by his lofty social strata – the Rastafarians. It happened when he and some friends were following the desolate coast of Hellshire, west of Kingston, in Blackwell's motorboat. The boat hit a submerged reef and sank. The party swam ashore, and Blackwell went to find help. He followed the shore for hours until he was ready to expire from exhaustion and thirst. Finally, in the distance he saw a hut. When he drew closer, a dreadlocked Rastaman looked out at him, and he almost died from fright. 'All you ever heard was that Rastas were killers,' he says. 'All you heard was that they were anti-white.' But the Rasta gave Blackwell a drink of water and a place to lie down for a few moments to regain his strength. Blackwell instead collapsed into a deep sleep, and awoke hours later to find himself being watched by six Rastas and a small dreadlocked boy. The Rastas fed Blackwell and talked to him, preaching Haile Selassie and reading from the Bible the relevant passages relating to the divinity of the Ethiopian emperor. Then they took him back to Kingston. Only eight or nine hours elapsed between the shipwreck and the rescue of Blackwell's friends, but Chris Blackwell had stepped into another world. From then on, he viewed the Rastafarians with sympathy instead of with fear and loathing.

Blackwell had begun recording music in Jamaica in 1959. Early that year he had hung around New York jazz clubs and immersed himself in Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus. Back in Jamaica he heard a jazz combo at the Half Moon Hotel, where he had been water-ski instructor, led by a pianist from Bermuda named Lance Haywood. Blackwell quickly incorporated a small record company whose name, Island Records, was chosen because of the success of Alec Waugh's novel *Island in the Sun* and the subsequent movie. He recorded the group at the studios of radio station RJR in Kingston, because there were no other recording studios in town, and some weeks later released Island Records' first album, *Lance Heywood At The Half Moon*.

In 1960 a turn in the Lindo family fortunes necessitated the sale of Terra Nova, Blackwell's childhood home. The young producer was devastated that he was unable to save the house, and decided then to apply himself to business so that his family would never endure such a humiliation again. Terra Nova was transformed into a hotel, lost to them forever.

The following year Island Records had its first hit: 'Little Sheila' by Laurel Aitkin went to number one in Jamaica. Blackwell's next single also went number one, and he ploughed his profits of $1,500 back into

the business and opened an office in Kingston, with his Chinese girlfriend answering the phones. Later that year Ian Fleming, who wrote many of his James Bond stories near Orcabessa in the parish of St Mary, recommended Blackwell to be producer Harry Saltzman's factotum in Jamaica during the filming of *Dr No*. Eventually Saltzman offered Blackwell a permanent job, but a fortune-teller advised Blackwell to stick with music.

Very little Jamaican popular music that wasn't mento or calypso had been recorded by the time Blackwell started out. His only early competition was from folklorist-turned-producer Edward Seaga and Clement Dodd. But then, in 1962, the Jamaican recording business burst into flower and dozens of young artists – Jimmy Cliff, the Maytals, the Wailers, among others – began their careers. Almost overnight, competition between Dodd, Duke Reid, Leslie Kong and King Edwards became fierce and cut-throat. Blackwell, too much the gentleman to compete directly, opted out. Since he was selling more records to the growing West Indian immigrant community in England than he was in Jamaica, Blackwell chose London, and made deals with the other Kingston producers to be their representative and in some cases their licensee in Britain. That same summer Island Records was established in an office in Knightsbridge, and the new company's first single – 'Twist Baby' by Jamaican singer Owen Grey – sold out its first pressing of five hundred copies, all distributed to tiny record shops in Brixton, Lewisham and Birmingham by the tireless Blackwell, working out of the boot of his Mini-Cooper. In England, he had no competition. Blackwell genuinely loved the Jamaican music he was selling, and the small enterprise earned enough to ignore the London 'swinging sixties' pop scene that was careening around him.

Blackwell's big break came in 1964. Island had earlier issued a single called 'We'll Meet' by a Jamaican duet, Roy and Millie, which had done good business. Blackwell searched out the girl singer, Millie Small, in Jamaica, flew her to London and gave her a song called 'My Boy Lollipop' to record. Blackwell had discovered the song back in 1959 as a 78 rpm rhythm and blues record in a New York shop. He licensed Millie Small's bouncy ska version to the Philips music conglomerate, and within a year the single had sold six million copies around the world. Blackwell had his first star, and some real money. He appointed himself Millie Small's manager, and went on the road.

On a Millie Small tour of Midlands clubs in 1964, Blackwell discovered the Spencer Davis Group with its fifteen-year-old lead singer, a boy with the voice of a whiskeyed-up blues belter from Memphis – Steve Winwood. He signed the band to Island, licensed

them again to Philips, and had his first English hit with 'Keep On Runnin' ' in 1965. Two years later the group had two world-wide hits with 'Gimme Some Lovin' ' and 'I'm A Man'. When they broke up in 1968, Steve Winwood formed a new band, Traffic. Putting all his marketing acumen behind the new group, Blackwell took his label out of the business of black music. Island became a rock company, eventually working with such English folk and rock musicians as John Martyn, Fairport Convention, Cat Stevens, Free, King Crimson, Jethro Tull and Emerson, Lake and Palmer.

By the time Bob walked into the Island office, Blackwell was a millionaire from his white rock business and had been all but ignoring Jamaican music for five years. Jimmy Cliff was the only Jamaican signed to Island, but since 1967 he had been releasing records only on the Trojan label, which Blackwell had formed in partnership back in 1967. But if he had been focussing on white rock music, Blackwell hadn't lost his feeling for music from Jamaica. When he met Bob, Blackwell knew exactly who he was talking to. Blackwell had been interested in Johnny Nash's progress, and told associates he had been interested in the Wailers for years but hadn't made an approach to them because of their reputation as latent Rude Boys who wouldn't sign a contract.

When Nash and Sims had first left for the States, Brent Clarke, the Wailers' promotion man, had gone to Island Records to look for work. He had played Blackwell some of the demos the Wailers had cut for Sims, and Blackwell was said to have been impressed. When they finally met each other, Bob reminded Blackwell that ten years before Island had released Bob's first British single, 'One Cup Of Coffee', as Leslie Kong's licensee in England. As it turned out, Bob didn't really have to sell the Wailers to Blackwell. Within days of their meeting, Blackwell agreed to advance the band £8,000 so the Wailers could return to Jamaica and record their first album for Island Records. Blackwell didn't seem to mind that the Wailers had contracts with Danny Sims. It was his style to worry about those kinds of problems only when they came up.

The Wailers' morale shot up when Blackwell agreed to back the band. Their entire career had been mismanaged and exploited, and now a white rock producer was taking a chance on them, assigning an unheard-of sum (a mere pittance by rock standards) for the group to cut the rhythm and vocal tracks for their own album.

When the Wailers returned to Jamaica, they collected their Island advance from bandleader Byron Lee, whose Kingston bank account was the conduit through which Blackwell's money was wired, and set

about rebuilding their lives. Bunny, immensely relieved to be back home, left Trench Town and moved to the Rasta enclave at Bull Bay, about ten miles east of the city along the coast road. This community was noted for its fresh fish and vegetables, and the talented people who were living there. Bob took some of his share and brought Rita and the children home from Delaware. A new Tuff Gong record shack was set up at Beeston Street and Chancery Lane, and the Wailers began to gather there to rehearse. Bob and Rita had already decided to move out to Bull Bay after the album was recorded.

The recording sessions for the album that would be called *Catch A Fire* took place early in 1972. Up to then, reggae had been a music that existed primarily on 45 rpm singles. Reggae songs were one-shot concepts, interrelated only through common rhythm and attitudes among the musicians. But the European and American audiences that Blackwell wanted the Wailers to penetrate were accustomed to getting their music from albums on which ten or more tunes clicked together in a more sustained atmosphere. Bob Marley was asked to make the first reggae *album*, which Blackwell would then transform into a record that could appeal to the rock fans who were his principal customers.

The sessions were held at three studios, Dynamic Sound, Harry J's, and Randy's on the North Parade. The tracks mingled several familiar Wailers numbers that had previously been released in Jamaica with new songs designed to flesh out the themes of alienation and rebellion the Wailers were projecting – 'Catch A Fire', 'Kinky Reggae', 'No More Trouble' and 'Baby We've Got A Date'. Various Kingston studio musicians rounded off the basic Wailers quintet which incorporated the two Barretts, Robbie Shakespeare on bass and Tyrone Downie on the organ. The veteran keyboardist Winston Wright also played the organ, and Seeco supplied additional hand percussion on *akete* drums. Several backing vocal tracks were also sung by Rita Marley and two friends, Marcia Griffiths and Judy Mowatt, who had been recruited when Peter and Bunny weren't around for a session.

As soon as the rhythm and vocal tracks were complete, Bob Marley was on a plane back to London, to overdub and mix the album with London session players. Guitarist Wayne Perkins, who had made his reputation at Muscle Shoals Studios, Alabama, supplied the sinuous rock guitar lines on 'Concrete Jungle' and 'Stir It Up'. Rabbit Bundrick overlaid clavinet, electric piano and moog synthesizer parts on most of the tracks. A percussionist named Chris Karen played tabla on 'Concrete Jungle'. Blackwell also artificially accelerated the Wailers' basic rhythms by a beat, thinking that the slowish pulse of reggae would turn off the rock crowd. Blackwell and Bob spent months fine-tuning

the album, postponing the actual release date until the very end of 1972. Johnny Nash, Danny Sims and CBS had to be dealt with first. Fortunately for the group and their entanglements Blackwell knew that in the Wailers he had a winner.

The Sims/Nash team at last returned to London for a short tour to promote *I Can See Clearly Now*. Bob met Sims and agreed to open the shows, backed by Nash's touring band, the Sons of the Jungle, singing 'Reggae On Broadway.' At this point Sims thought the Wailers were still in his pocket; he was trying to convince CBS to release another Marley single and began negotiating for a Wailers tour of England. The rest of the band was flown to London and installed in a studio, where they rehearsed in preparation for a tour that was delayed and postponed again and again. When rumours spread through Anglo-Jamaican London that the Wailers were rehearsing, a couple of hundred young West Indians would show up to jam the space, dancing when the band locked into its mesmerizing groove.

Finally, backstage at Johnny Nash's London concert, the three Wailers confronted Sims with their desire to go with Island. Sims stalled the young musicians, explaining that he had already given CBS five tracks towards the Wailers' album and that he had persuaded the company to release a sequel to 'Reggae On Broadway.' Before the discussion could be renewed Sims and Nash again decamped for New York, where Nash's American label was panicky. Nash's version of Marley's 'Stir It Up' had been released but was failing to perform as well as 'I Can See Clearly Now', which had been number one for five weeks. At the same time, CBS sent their lawyer over to Island to remind Blackwell that the Wailers were signed to CBS through Danny Sims. The document the CBS lawyer produced was a photocopy of a typed contract only half a page long. Blackwell was reluctant to face a lawsuit from Cayman Music, so he suggested that Marley fly to New York to ask Danny Sims how much he wanted to release the band to Island.

Danny Sims had failed Bob Marley but it was not for lack of trying. Sims explained simply: 'What happened was that Johnny broke in the US, and Bob didn't.' CBS was trying to back off from releasing another Bob Marley record in England, and so when Bob appeared backstage at Nash's New York show and told Sims he wanted his contract back, Sims was prepared to listen. He told Bob that the Wailers owed CBS for their advances and expenses, but offered to release the group if they signed a new song-writing contract with Cayman Music. Sims also wanted Island to pay £5000 for their release, plus a two per cent override on the Wailers' first six albums. Next morning, Bob telephoned Sims' demands to Blackwell, and Blackwell agreed to the

terms. Island had the Wailers, but Danny Sims had the Wailers' all-important publishing.

While he was in New York, Bob linked up with Traffic, his fellow Island artists, who were on the New York stop of their last American tour. Travelling with Traffic was Dickie Jobson, an old friend of Blackwell's from Jamaica who also worked for Island. Jobson invited Bob to a party for the band after the New York show. The scene at the band's suite at the Windsor Hotel on West 58th Street that night was right out of *Midnight Ravers*. Groupies were in hot competition with drug dealers for the musicians' attention; Traffic's Jim Capaldi was jamming with some friends, show biz types were shouting at each other, and Bob Marley sat quietly in a corner, taking it all in.

Eventually a young New York artist and harmonica player named Lee Jaffe struck up a conversation with Bob. Jaffe was a friend of Capaldi's from London, where they had met while working on a film with the beautiful Jamaican actress Esther Anderson, who was also at the party. Bob Marley shared a joint with Lee Jaffe and eventually took out his guitar; Jaffe produced his harmonica and started to play the blues. Bob was a sucker for blues music, and began to jam. A friendship began that night that was to last the rest of Bob's life. For the next three years, Lee Jaffe went almost everywhere with Bob, road-managing the earliest Wailers tours in America and eventually becoming the only white musician ever to play with the Wailers.

Lee Jaffe spent the next few days helping Bob and Dickie Jobson buy new equipment for the Wailers. When it was time for Bob to return to Kingston, he invited Jaffe to come down with him. Jobson offered a place to stay, and Esther Anderson was going too, so Jaffe decided to see for himself what these Wailers were all about.

A few days later he stepped into the tropic glare of the Kingston airport and soon found Bob at his new rehearsal studio, an outbuilding at the back of a large pink mansion that Blackwell had just bought at 56 Hope Road and re-christened 'Island House'. It was in the same neighbourhood as Blackwell's old house Terra Nova and the stately grounds of Jamaica House, the prime minister's official residence, and, ironically, only yards from where Norval Marley and his family had lived. Now Blackwell was turning the pink house into Island Records' Jamaican headquarters and had given Bob the run of the place. Bob, used to living in his studio from Coxsone days, slowly took over Hope Road with his entourage of musicians and dreadlocked Trench Town followers. The neighbours were unhappy, and the police often came around to sniff for ganja. But by then Bob knew how to talk to cops, and there was no trouble.

Soon after Jaffe arrived in Jamaica, Chris Blackwell chartered an old DC3 and the Island circle set out for Carnival in Trinidad. Lee Jaffe went along, joining Bob, Chris, Dickie Jobson, Jim Capaldi and Esther Anderson. All the seats had been taken out of the plane, and the party was spread out on cushions all over the deck. The plane island-hopped all the way to Trinidad; when Blackwell saw a nice beach somewhere below, he'd tell the pilot to land so everybody could swim.

Back in Jamaica, Lee Jaffe settled into accompanying Bob on his daily routine. Rita had recently had Bob's second son, Stephen Marley, and was living at a little house at Bull Bay. Bob was alternately living with her and at 56 Hope Road, where he was carrying on his affair with Esther Anderson. Bob and Esther had started out as friends – she had previously been linked romantically with both Marlon Brando and Chris Blackwell – but a strong physical attraction soon drew them and kept them together. Bob also spent occasional nights with 'the mothers of his babies', as the Jamaican euphemism goes. Back in 1970 one of Bob's Trench Town girlfriends, Pat Williams, had borne him a son, named Robbie, and another, Janet, was then pregnant with a boy who was to be named Rohan Marley. During his second stay in London, Bob had impregnated a black English girl, also named Janet, who would have a daughter called Karen Marley.

If Bob spent the night at Hope Road, his day would begin just before sunrise. As dawn broke over Long Mountain, someone would pack and light a chalice full of herb, and pass it among the waking brethren. Skill Cole was back from a season playing for Santos Brazil, one of the top soccer teams in the world, and he had Bob and friends in training for weeks at a time, subsisting on little but fresh juices, hard running and football. As Rastas, they saw their bodies as temples that should be kept strong and unprofaned by processed or forbidden foods like meat, salt and shellfish. The group would then pile into Bob's Ford Capri or Lee's rented car and drive to Bull Bay for an hour of running on the beach, Bob and Skill in front. Some days they ran up a long hillside to a spectacular waterfall at Cane River. Bob would shed his steaming clothes down to his striped briefs and plunge into the icy water. The young lions would leisurely shampoo their locks in the clean spring, luxuriating in the rinsing of their heads in the falling water. Bob usually looked in on Rita, who was rebuilding her house by herself, hauling beams and pouring concrete, and the children before leaving for downtown Kingston and the Tuff Gong record shop on Beeston Street, where he could check up on sales and the downtown reggae scene. When the Wailers signed with Island, they retained the rights to all

their records in the Caribbean, so as not to depend too heavily on problematic foreign royalties for daily survival. Tuff Gong record shop stocked dozens of obscure singles by the Wailers, Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Bunny Livingston, Rita Marley, Family Man and all their permutations. The shop was the main Wailers hang-out and office, and the source of a fairly constant trickle of petty cash. A food shop next door sold box lunches of sprats and rice, and Bob would usually eat and drink a couple of jellies before collaring Skill and driving over to Trench Town in search of fresh herb to smoke.

Uptown, at Island House, Bob was still an unwanted outsider. But driving slowly through Trench Town to avoid the flocks of ghetto children darting around the car, he progressed like a hero returning home. Everyone on the street knew him and called out to him, and while he was bartering for herb in some yard, men and boys would line up to shake his hand or ask for a few shillings. The next stop was usually the ball field at Boy's Town, where Bob and Skill played soccer almost every day, as Bob had done as a boy. Skill Cole was like a god in Jamaica then and when he teamed with the fast passing of Bob, their pick-up football squads were usually unbeatable. By the time the game had finished it was about four o'clock, and time for daily rehearsal back at Hope Road. Island Records had a phone and a secretary working there, and after the day's business had been transacted, it was music for the rest of the evening. The Wailers would rehearse until midnight and beyond, and the harsh red coal of the ganja chalice would glow brightly until Bob slept. Four or five hours later, at dawn, someone would fire up the chalice again, and a new day would begin.

When the Wailers weren't rehearsing, or when Bob wanted or needed a few days away from the smokey atmosphere of Kingston, they drove up to St Ann to hang out at Nine Miles. Omeriah's place was now 'Auntie's house' and Bob liked to go there and relax, cook I-tal food and take long hikes through the mountain bush to the herb fields. He would walk through the waving strands of marijuana, whose bright green leaves seemed to glow in contrast to the lush darkness of the steep St Ann hillside. The days at Nine Miles restored Bob's sense of place, his roots, his grandfather, his *home*. For hours he sat on hill-tops, reading the Bible aloud to Skill or Lee or whoever was about. His favourite book then was the Psalms, and as he read the verses his features would assume the same mask of concentration and astral travel that they assumed when he took the stage. Nine Miles was Bob's anchor. In Jamaica, the worst that could be said about a person was that they didn't come from anywhere.

On the day appointed to return to Kingston, the group would drive

off before sunrise, as the morning mists covered the dirt roads of the parish like a blanket, and the sound of the motor startled sleeping cattle egrets into flight.

It was no accident that the Wailers' first album, *Catch A Fire*, should have coincided with the election of Michael Manley as the new prime minister of Jamaica. For just as *Catch A Fire* launched Jamaican music into the rest of the world, the election of a socialist government transformed Jamaica from a sleepy banana republic to a struggling, morally preoccupied nation at war with its own history.

At 56 Hope Road, at Bull Bay, in Trench Town, politics was the hottest topic of the year. It seemed the whole island was ready for the politics of sharing that Michael Manley espoused. 'When I look at my people,' Manley cried, 'my heart *bleeds*.' The island's best singers weighed in behind the PNP: Delroy Wilson's 'Better Must Come' was the campaign's theme song; Clancy Eccles's 'Rod Of Correction', Max Romeo's 'Let The Power Fall On I', Junior Byles' 'Beat Down Babylon' and 'Hail The Man' by Ken Lazarus all proclaimed the rise of a Jamaica yearning for equal rights and justice. But for all the militancy of the reggae musicians, JLP prime minister Hugh Shearer's government countered with strict censorship. All pro-PNP songs were banned from radio stations JBC and RJR. The Wailers were included in the ban because of their rebellious associations and because Bob had played on the PNP Musical Bandwagon the year before. The ban was so effective that Tuff Gong didn't bother to release any records in 1972.

When the general elections were held that autumn, Michael Manley won the largest majority in Jamaican parliamentary history, marred only by Jamaica's traditional election-eve violence. It was the beginning of a new order in old Jamaica.

Catch A Fire was released by Island Records in England in December 1972, and in America the following January. Dark, ominous, threatening, the album was a rebel's indictment of slavery and colonialism, a celebration of reggae trance and sexuality. Blackwell had taken the bottom-heavy Jamaican rhythm tracks and given the music a new 'top' with layers of rock guitar and synthesizers. The album's cover was an expensive die-cut cardboard Zippo lighter that seemed to burst into flame when opened. The lighter was emblematic of the bitter protest contained in Bob and Peter's lyrics.

Catch A Fire didn't catch on at first; the album was released in America through Capitol Records, who thought reggae was sheer savagery and allowed only minimal promotion. Since the film *The Harder They Come* was not yet on general release, reggae and Jamaican

culture were alien commodities to the American rock audience. Nevertheless, the first reviews were excellent in England, more familiar with West Indian music, and good in America, where *Rolling Stone* critic Rob Houghton opined that the record had 'a mature, fully realized sound with a beautiful lyric sensibility that turns well-known stylistics into a fresh, vibrant music'. Despite the lack of advertising, *Catch A Fire* sold fourteen thousand copies that first year, and more important, it changed reggae's direction. Years later, the Anglo-Jamaican dub poet Linton Kwezi Johnson wrote that the album's effect was such that 'a whole new style of Jamaican music has come into being. It has a different character, a different sound . . . what I can only describe as "International Reggae". It incorporates elements from popular music, internationally: rock and soul, blues and funk. These elements facilitated a breakthrough on the international market. . . . Instead of concentrating exclusively on a bottom-heavy sound with the emphasis on drum and bass, you had on this record more of a "toppy" mix, a lighter sound. The emphasis is more on the guitar and other fillers. On no other Jamaican reggae recording . . . was such a clear-cut attempt made to incorporate the modern electronic sounds of metropolitan music.' *Catch A Fire* was perhaps the first Anglo-Jamaican reggae record; its stereo engineering made the other Jamaican records, all monaural, sound tinny and crude.

Catch A Fire made its first impact upon the watchful and restive music media rather than the public. Many music writers were repelled by the excess of glitter rock musicians; people wanted to dance again, and Bob gave them a new beat and lyrics that wouldn't rot their minds. The great heroes of the rock era were dead or retired; Bob Marley, Rasta, rebel, street poet, became more attractive. Reggae was something that one could believe in. *'Catch a fire, you're gonna get burned!'*

With the release of their first album the Wailers became a professional rock band, with all the responsibilities and expectations of any other band on the Euro-American circuit. In return for financial backing and huge amounts of artistic control, Island Records expected 'the Wailers' (as they were billed on *Catch A Fire*) to tour frequently to support album sales, and record new albums within a specified time to meet the demand for their music. As soon as *Catch A Fire* came out, Chris Blackwell told Bob Marley that he wanted another album from the Wailers as soon as possible and that Island would finance a tour of the UK in the spring and American clubs that summer and autumn. Bob and the band rehearsed songs from the new album, and auditioned for a keyboard player to take on the road. Once a keyboard player was hired the Wailers became a six-piece ensemble.

His name was Earl Lindo, born in Kingston in 1953. Everyone called him 'Wire' (pronounced 'Wya'); musicians called him a genius. He was the keyboard player for a Jamaican showband called Now Generation, and he had a brooding, organic melodic sensibility that easily matched the Wailers. He replaced the juvenile Tyrone Downie, the Wailers' unpaid keyboard player and fan, who had become disillusioned with the Wailers and fled for the security of a North Coast hotel band up in Ocho Rios, JoJo Bennett and the Fugitives. At first Wire didn't mean to join the Wailers; he merely took leave from Now Generation to travel as a hired keyboard man for the Wailers until their next album was recorded and for the duration of their tours. It wasn't as if he were really *joining* the band.

Then Perry Henzell's *The Harder They Come* opened. A brilliant evocation of a famous Jamaican gunman of the late 1940s, the film starred Jimmy Cliff as the bandit Rhygin', who in real life was shot down by police outside Kingston Harbour in 1948. The film's soundtrack, released by Chris Blackwell's specialty label, Mango, was an anthology of classic rock-steady hits by Desmond Dekker, the Maytals, the Melodians and Jimmy Cliff. The soundtrack was even more important than *Catch A Fire* in advancing Jamaican music around the world. Based on its success, Blackwell signed Toots and the Maytals, for whom there was an international demand based on 'Sweet and Dandy' from the soundtrack, and was also starting to work with the Heptones, Lee Perry, an old ska group called Justin Hinds and the Dominoes and a new group of uptown Rasta boys who were calling themselves Third World.

The working title of the Wailers' second album was *Reincarnated Souls*, one of the new tunes Bunny had written. The pattern of trusted old songs besides new, more immediate broadsides was continued from the *Catch A Fire* sessions. Recording at Harry J's comfortable uptown studio, financed in part by Blackwell so Island's Jamaican artists would have decent recording facilities, the Wailers quickly cut new versions of 'Put It On', 'Small Axe' and 'Duppy Conqueror'. The band also cut three new songs by Bunny – 'Reincarnated Souls', 'Hallelujah Time' and 'Pass It On' – Peter Tosh's 'One Foundation' and a soulful, dramatic *burru* meditation called 'Rasta Man Chant', with which the group was planning to open future shows in England. These peaceful, almost hymn-like songs contrasted sharply with the angry and vengeful new material that Bob Marley was bringing the Wailers, foreshadowing the philosophical differences that would later dissolve the group. Songs like 'I Shot The Sheriff', 'Burnin' And Lootin' ' and 'Get Up Stand Up'

(co-written with Peter Tosh) introduced a hard and fearless new sound for reggae, very much in tune with the militant socialism that prevailed during the early years of Michael Manley's government.

It was at Countryman's place on the beach that 'I Shot The Sheriff' was born. Countryman was the little Rasta boy Chris Blackwell had met on that same beach fifteen years before. Bob and his entourage had taken to hanging out at Countryman's after Dickie Jobson had discovered the young fisherman-herbsman's hut while searching for locations to shoot commercials. Not only was Countryman the most righteous dread around, but he was said to produce lightning on command and grew the sweetest ganja – 'goatshit' it was called – to be found near Kingston. One of Countryman's favourite pastimes in those days was to swim out to sea as far as he could, just for the sheer gamble of seeing whether he could make it back to shore alive. It was Countryman's wild life force that appealed to Bob, who liked to come out with his guitar, light the chalice with his friends and work on songs. On the day that 'I Shot the Sheriff' was born, Bob, Skill Cole and Lee Jaffe were singing the song and laughing with delight when two enormous fat girls waddled up the beach. As Bob sang out '*I shot the sheriff*' and Skill and Lee roared back, '*But I didn't shoot no deputy*,' the two fat girls started to dance and gyrate. Bob knew he had a *big* hit.

Recording at Harry J's was an easy-going affair for the Wailers, who didn't have to worry about studio time any more. Bob sat around for hours, almost naked in the tropical afternoon, rolling spliffs the size and shape of an ice-cream cone. Between songs Bob and Skill would wrestle and slap-fight each other around the yard. There was a constant parade of hangers-on, including an older disc jockey who provoked the famous Marley glare when he asked Bob if he could watch him record.

'*Cho*,' spat Bob, a Jamaican negative. 'Me nuh wan' ya fe stand 'round an' *watch* I.'

The man stammered that he didn't want to stare at Bob, but Marley got there first.

'It look like ya wan' find out where I head rest. Ya gwan round all kinda corner tryin' fe smart me to find out where I head rest. Just come and ask me where I head rest. If ya wan' know where I head rest, I head rest with *Jah*.'

The following month, the Wailers packed their instruments, sweaters and overcoats, and took off for London and their first tour. On the way, Bob went to Delaware to see his mother. Although Bob had worn his hair in modified dreadlocks twice before, he had worn an Afro style for the past three years. So when he got to Delaware, Cedella was surprised to see Bob's hair pent up in a red, green and gold tam, the

colours of the flag of Ethiopia. At the kitchen table, Bob smiled and said, 'Mama, look at this.' He pulled off his tam and a new crown of sprouting locks popped out, kinky as kinky can be.

'You growing it again?' Cedella asked, still dubious.

'Yes, mama.'

'Nes', you locksing up forever now?'

'Yes, mama.'

Bob Marley never cut his hair again.

When the Wailers arrived in London in April 1973 to begin a tour of Britain, they found a surprise waiting for them. London record shops were carrying a Wailers album, *African Herbsman* on the Trojan label, that the group knew nothing about. The best of the Wailers records cut for Lee Perry, including 'Trench Town Rock', had apparently been sold by Scratch to Lee Goptal, the Anglo-Indian accountant who had founded Trojan in partnership with Chris Blackwell. Goptal and Blackwell had parted the year before, with Goptal retaining Trojan. The Wailers now found their music a pawn in a businessmen's game. Island may have the Wailers, but Goptal and Lee Perry wanted a piece of the action too. And they got it, because *African Herbsman* was a brilliant album of essential and previously unreleased early Wailers. When *African Herbsman* became available in America its hypnotic allure captivated many listeners who had passed over *Catch A Fire*. For some Wailers fans, the power of *African Herbsman* has never been equalled.

The new six-piece Wailers began a gruelling tour of British cinemas and black dance-halls at the Greyhound in the Fulham Road. Playing two shows a night, the band was ragged in the early dates, perhaps because Wire and the new arrangements had not yet jelled. Then they hit provincial England in a tiny van without even a road manager, carrying and setting up their instruments themselves. Wire Lindo tuned the bass and other two guitars himself before the shows. The group spent a week playing black clubs in Birmingham, and eventually got as far as Belfast where they played before a shocked and subdued pub audience who had never heard any kind of West Indian music before. Afterwards, Peter Tosh remembers, people came backstage to say how much they liked the band.

By the time the Wailers returned to London, the six musicians had tightened into a crack reggae-rock band, but were on the verge of disintegrating from the rigours of touring on a low budget and lack of familiar nourishment. Bunny in particular was suffering from depression brought on by lack of food. A strict I-talist who forbade

himself any processed food, Bunny would fast for days on the road, and often went without sleep as well. Relations between the three original Wailers were strained, with both Peter and Bunny complaining of the dominant role that Bob had assumed, backed by Blackwell.

But they were hot news in London. Island Records had booked them into a super-cool club called the Speakeasy, and the Wailers delivered blistering, all-stops-out performances that turned the chic club into a steamy dance in Trench Town. They played on television for *Old Grey Whistle Test* on 20 May, doing 'Concrete Jungle' and 'Stop That Train'. Bob stood in the middle of the stage set, wearing leather pants and a sweater, his hair just turning to locks, strapped into a telecaster. Bunny was on the right, in striped pants and his trademark knitted Rasta vest, alternately playing *akete* drums and timbals with brushes. Peter stood on the left, a tam pulled tight over his head, eyes hidden by shades, concentrating on his nervous, rhythmic guitar chick. Bob provided the visual focus, 'rocking back and forth like a hobby-horse' according to one reviewer.

During the following week, the Wailers gave an extraordinary live concert at the BBC's Paris Theatre, which was broadcast as part of the *Top Gear* series. Performing on the British radio network for the first time, the Wailers were on their best behaviour, and the performance emerged as a perfect jewel, almost 'chamber reggae' in the band's precision and attention to detail. After a well-meaning compère, Peter Drummond, introduced the group to raucous whistles and applause from the Wailers' loyal West Indian claque, Bob said thank you and the group clicked into the show-opener, 'Rasta Man Chant'. The band was nervous and Bunny's opening drum-beat was tentative, but then the Barrett brothers synched in and the angelic Wailers harmony rang out: '*Said I hear the words of the Rasta man seh/Babylon your throne gone down gone down/Babylon your throne gone down.*'

After 3.15 minutes the Wailers were cut off and the compère began his between-song patter. 'That was a chant, which is sort of a roots song for the Wailers, to do with a cult which is Rasta Faria, which a lot of West Indians are turning to, which was extremely popular in the 1920s. Rasta meaning "head", Faria meaning "creator". This next number is on their current album, *Catch A Fire*, composed by Bob Marley. It's called "Slave Driver".'

Carly Barrett tapped out the opening beats, and a subdued version followed, driven by Tosh's cruelly-chopping guitar and Wire's vivid, passionate organ breaks. When the number was through, the compère gently urged the crowd to dance, and the party was under way. A great rendition of 'Stop That Train' was next, with Tosh delivering his

strongest singing of the tour over the breathless harmonies of Bunny and Bob. The Wailers' vaunted harmonies were again on display in the dramatic *acapella* choral intro to 'No More Trouble', which led into a hard-rocking groove as soon as the rhythm section kicked in. Tosh followed this with an improvised lyric on '400 Years': '*Won't you come with me/You're black and you're proud/So you got to be free*,' as the band supplied a monster chamber dub skank on the song's coda.

Now the intensity of the set was really starting to build up. 'Midnight Ravers' was a showpiece, six minutes of apocalyptic imagery, the music of stampede invading the staid precincts of the BBC. 'Stir It Up' became an even stronger sex litany when coloured with Tosh's obscene wah-wah guitar solo on top of the instrumental passage. 'Concrete Jungle' followed with the fury of a blast furnace. The Wailers took the song fast, Carly rushing the beat a little after a sharp snare intro. Wire made a mistake half-way through the song, starting his solo before the second chorus had finished. Bob shot Wire an evil look and killed the song early, going right in to the Wailers' new track from their forthcoming album, 'Get Up Stand Up'. The version was pure, ticking 1973 Wailers, brimming with tension: '*Get up, stand up/Stand up for your rights/Get up, stand up/Never give up the fight*.' The compère announced the last number, and the audience showed their disappointment vehemently. 'Kinky Reggae', the story of looking for herb in Piccadilly Circus, made an entrancing finish. Backstage after the show, Bob got hot with Wire. Always the perfectionist, Bob didn't like mistakes.

After three months in England, the Wailers headed home. Everybody was exhausted and in bad shape. Peter and Bunny had lost weight, Wire and Carly were acting strange, and Family Man kept whatever was bothering him to himself, as usual. Only Bob seemed to thrive, and why not? He had a new English girlfriend and increasing control over the Wailers and his future.

As soon as their plane touched the ground of Jamaica, Bunny left the band. He never toured with the Wailers again. Bob returned briefly to his familiar life, living intermittently with Rita and the children, hanging out with Skill and the boys at Tuff Gong on Beeston Street and at Island House, visiting the mothers of his children, playing football, rehearsing for a brief North American tour planned for the summer. Immediately there was a crisis when Bunny announced that he wouldn't go to America, that his future as a Wailer would include only recording and performances in Jamaica. Bunny hated aeroplanes and had vowed never to fly again. Bob and Peter conferred on the situation and decided to ask their harmony teacher, Joe Higgs, to go on tour to sing Bunny's ethereal high harmony parts. Higgs agreed immediately,

and joined the rehearsals behind Island House.

At this point the Wailers were operating without a manager. The group was dependent on Blackwell for the things a manager usually provides – recording supervision, artistic direction and finding enough work to feed the musicians' children. Blackwell knew that the Wailers had to make a few key showcase performances in the States in order to support *Catch A Fire*, so Lee Jaffe was flown to New York and installed in a suite at the Windsor Hotel. Lee took a copy of *Catch A Fire* over to Max's Kansas City on Park Avenue South, and persuaded New York's leading pop showcase to book the Wailers for the second week of July 1973 as opening act for a new young talent from New Jersey named Bruce Springsteen. Then he called Paul's Mall, a basement jazz club in Boston, and booked the Wailers for the first week of July at $1,000 a week for the band. Gradually other dates began to fill in, and the Wailers had a little tour. Island Records picked up the tour's expenses as part of the promotion campaign the company was preparing to launch.

The Wailers went out again as a six-piece, Joe Higgs subbing for Bunny. Higgs recalls his involvement: 'The tour was pending, but something went down between Bob, Bunny, Peter and Island Records that I don't know. Bunny refused to tour, and realizing that it was really something in the air hanging for Bob, he ask me to fill in for Bunny. So I went along in 1973, the first North American tour the Wailers went.

'It was the first Jamaican band to go on tour to expose our Jamaican music. Our first major acceptance came from Boston. We toured from east to west, north to south in the States. We went to California, Chicago, New York, all those places. We went to Lexington, Kentucky. We went to Tampa, Florida. We went to Cambridge in Massachusetts, and Pittsfield – a whole itinerary that a lot of people have never been to in the reggae circuit.

'At first the audience showed mixed emotions . . . it was something they weren't ready to accept immediately. It was like reminding them of something. And we noticed it was a 95 per cent white audience most of the way. Even though we were playing for capacity, we were concerned with the composition of the audience we had seen on tour.

'The tour was hard work. We had to clear our own luggage, and pack our own instruments, because we had to be very economical. It was an economical tour to promote *Catch A Fire*. And Bob Marley was very inspirational to me, because I remembered how we used to sing in Trench Town, when he would show what he could do by singing for seven or eight hours a day yunno, stopping to eat, stopping to smoke and returning to sing again. And on tour he did two-hour concerts, like

two shows per night yunno, with just an hour rest between shows . . . I was satisfied to see that he was so strong on tour, capable of doing two shows a night for three nights straight.'

At Paul's Mall in Boston, the Wailers drew packed houses every night. The ultra-hip all-white audience yelled standard Rasta salutations like 'Ites' and 'I-rie' up to the bandstand. The opening act, the rock band Orleans, were rabid Wailers fans and staked out their own seats as soon as their set was over. As the American club audiences learned to identify with Jamaican youth culture – trance music, ganja, rebellion – they were sucked in by the relentless spiritual tug of the Wailers' reggae chop.

A week later at Max's Kansas City, opening for Bruce Springsteen, the Wailers threw down another blistering performance before a nonchalant audience of Springsteen fans. Playing three sets a night on the weekend, they opened with the new version of 'Put It On', the old song stretched to its limit by the whacking, almost drummed rhythm-guitar licks. The sound system was terrible, and although Carly was hot and prominent, Family Man was inaudible, drowned out by Wire's cheesy-sounding organ. Even with the jabbering crowd and distorted blats of electronic feedback, the band hit a fast, rocking reggae groove by the time it led into 'Slave Driver'. Bob's singing was threatening and direct, without the cunning vocal embellishments of later years. The relentless Wailers rhythm section gradually shut up the audience, and by the end of the set even the waitresses had stopped hassling the customers and were staring, open-mouthed. All the shows went like that for the rest of the tour, which finished at the Matrix Club in San Francisco early in August.

Back in Boston, reporter James Isaacs visited the band in their motel room, and captured the ambience of the Wailers on tour:

'In the miniscule lobby a small, somewhat frayed desk clerk directs us to the second floor. The door opens before we can knock. It is Lee, a long-haired young white New Yorker who is the road manager. He ushers us into another land.

'The air inside the suite, sticky and as thick as stew, is an olfactory collage of heavy *ganja* smoke, fish being boiled in the kitchenette, last night's incense, watermelon and bath water. The Wailers are staying here, Lee says, because there is the kitchenette and they eat *Jamaican* food.

'It is 3.30 in the afternoon on the Wailers' second day in Boston. And Aston "Family Man" Barrett, the bassist, is lying soundlessly on the floor, his head resting against a guitar case. It is difficult to tell whether he is napping, *incommunicado* or just stoned, for his ever-present shades

shield his eyes from the visitors with their tape-recorders and notepads. His brother Carly the drummer with whom he stirs up the lascivious reggae metre, is in front of the kitchenette stove preparing a kind of fish stew. He wears a pin with Haile Selassie's picture on it. Like the others in the band, he is a Rasta.

'Wire, the newest and youngest Wailer, sits at a table, on which there is a watermelon and a cabbage, while Peter MacIntosh plays the chicken-scratch shuffle through a cigar-box amp. In the middle of the room Bob Marley, twenty-eight, sits contemplatively. He wears only a striped bikini and the ends of his tangled, fleecy hair are still wet from the tub.'

Many hard-core Jamaican fans of the Wailers, who felt that *Catch A Fire*'s murky gloss represented a sellout to a Babylonian music cartel, were relieved when the Wailers' second album was released in October 1973. The album was retitled *Burnin'* when Bunny's 'Reincarnated Souls' track was scrapped from the LP and issued as the B-side of the 'Concrete Jungle' single that Island released in England to coincide with the spring tour. *Burnin'* had much more of a rootsy Jamaican sound – organic, I-tal, more acoustic and 'wooden'. Reflecting the differences among its musicians, the album presented a mixed message: Bob's neo-Rude protest anthems versus Bunny's paeans to the grandeur of Rastafarian theology. It was two sides of the same coin. The title song, 'Burnin' And Lootin', was partly inspired by the new political infighting that was beginning to develop in the Kingston slums as PNP socialism tightened its control. Wire's dark organ and Tosh's guitar describe a people under curfew, confronting '*uniforms of brutality*'. The song shows the cleansing side of street violence: *Burnin' and-a lootin' tonight/Burnin' all pollution tonight/Burnin' all illusion tonight*. In the end, for the people of the ghetto, there is only despair and illusions going up in flame. The album finished with the *burru/akete* vocal harmony of 'Rasta Man Chant'. The soaring three-part male harmonies on that track marked the end of the days of the old Wailing Wailers. What would emerge was Bob's new African style of singing, previewed in subtle spots on *Burnin'*.

A few weeks before the Wailers' autumn tour was to start, Bob was sitting under the big tree behind Hope Road, peeling a mango with a kitchen knife when the first shipment of *Burnin'* T-shirts arrived. The pale yellow shirts were part of Island's promotional paraphernalia for the new album, and they were spectacular. One of Esther Anderson's photos of Bob from the album sleeve, a locks-back profile with a six-inch ganja cigar jutting defiantly from his mouth, was silk-screened in brown in front. Bob reached in the carton and pulled out a shirt, one

marked small. He put the shirt on, and Bob on the shirt puffed away, while Bob in I-rality went back to peeling his mango, his pointed beard, Caucasian nose and the sharp planes of his face standing out against the rounded contours of the faces around him.

In October the Wailers continued their drive for fame and fortune, joining a seventeen-city Sly and the Family Stone tour as opening act. Joe Higgs again replaced Bunny Livingston, who still refused to tour. Sly Stone was the hottest thing in black music then, and the Wailers were pleased to be working with him despite Sly's eccentricity and habit of missing shows.

Four shows into the tour, the Wailers were fired. They had been both blowing the vaunted Family Stone off their own stage and drawing boos from Sly's fans. Stranded in Las Vegas, where they had been dropped from the tour, without money or a manager, the band's spirits were abysmal. Bob was upset, and sat for hours in his hotel room, his luggage strewn about the room, his collarless brown suede jacket zipped tight to stay the cold of the desert night, his eyes a million miles away.

Somehow the band got to San Francisco, where the Wailers' jam-packed shows at the Matrix had won a lot of fans, in order to fulfil a commitment for a live broadcast over the pioneering rock station KSAN-FM. In San Francisco the Wailers' herb supply was replenished and their spirit lifted. On the morning of the broadcast, Bob pulled on his sleeveless blue sweater and went to the motel coffee-shop for breakfast. Over coffee he scanned the headlines of the *San Francisco Examiner*. 'Stunning Collapse of Nixon Tape Strategy. Cox and Ruckleshaus are Fired. Attorney General Richardson out.' The head of another story read: 'Angry Bipartisan Impeachment Talk.' The rest of the front page reported the Israelis' claim to be within miles of Cairo. Ignoring these stories, Bob turned immediately to the astrology page to check the forecast for Aquarius, then checked the entertainment section to see if there was a mention of the Wailers. Then he threw the paper into the garbage bin and went out into the bright light to join the rest of the band.

That afternoon, the Wailers broadcast their new show from the Record Plant, a top recording studio for the San Francisco music scene, located in Sausalito. Playing to about five people in the studio, the Wailers delivered another set of perfect chamber reggae. After a warm intro by KSAN DJ Tom Donahue, who pointed out that San Francisco had been gripped by Wailermania, the set opened with Peter, Bob and Joe Higgs seated in front of their mikes, laying out the heartbeat Rasta pulse on hand drums. Joe played an alto drum called *funde*; Bob played the *repeater*, and Peter supplied the deep boom of a huge red, green and

gold bass drum. During the fade-out of 'Rasta Man Chant' Bob scatted the melody of a current hit, Manfred Mann's 'Pretty Flamingo'.

The song over, Bob quietly gave the Rasta benediction, 'Ites.' Then the band swung into a resurrected oldie, 'Bend Down Low'. The love song was now a fast reggae-rocker and a staple of the Wailers' new repertoire. 'Catch A Fire' was next, with Wire's organ dominant while the rest of the band functioned as rhythm section. The set changed pace with Peter Tosh's new showpiece, 'You Can't Blame The Youth'. A litany of the villains of revisionist black history (Columbus, Marco Polo, Henry Morgan) the song made the point: *When every Christmas come/You buy the youth a fancy toy gun/So you can't blame the youth of today/You can't fool the youth*. Tosh continued with a passionate version of 'Stop That Train' before the band swung back into Marley's groove with 'Burnin' And Lootin'. There was a lull after the tune stopped, and Bob asked what to play. Joe Higgs said, 'Do the reggae song,' and Carly tapped out the drum opening to 'Kinky Reggae', full of whip-lash guitars and Wire's out-of-control organ lines.

The final three numbers of the broadcast were breathtaking. 'Get Up Stand Up' was taken slow, a very roots-reggae tempo that let people hear the song's new lyrics from Peter and Bob: '*We're sick and tired of your bullshit game/Die and go to heaven in Jesus name/We know and we understand/Almighty God is a living man*.' On the 'preacher man' verse, Bob launched into a jazz/scat vocal over the Barrett Brothers' dub system, and the effect was transcendent, pure Marley tongue-talking in the spirit of Jah. The first encore was 'Rude Boy', a rocking reggae version of the old song from the lost days of Rude. '*Walk the proud land*,' they wailed, in the city by the bay. '*I've got to keep on movin'/I've got to keep on movin'/I've got to keep on movin'/Ska quadrille . . .*' As the band hurriedly tuned for the finale, Bob hushed them with, 'Lively up yahself sah! Cool foot, cool foot, cool foot.' The show ended with an extended jam on 'Lively Up Yourself', the song the Wailers had cut for the Upsetter; now Bob was thinking of using it to open the Wailers' next album. Its first public performance was at KSAN that afternoon in October 1973. '*Lively up yourself and don't be no drag/Lively up yourself, cos reggae is another bag*.'

The North American tour was over. The Wailers had become famous and promoted their records, but they hadn't made any money. Disgruntled, Joe Higgs caught the first plane back to Jamaica after the KSAN gig, and the Wailers played their last show as a five-piece. It was a televised benefit for the Ethiopian Famine Relief Fund, a charity dear to the hearts of Bob and Peter, and the Wailers flew a thousand miles, to

Edmonton in Canada, to take part. There is a videotape of the show.

'And now we have the number-one reggae group in the world, ladies and gentlemen, Bob Marley and the Wailers, one time!' announced the compère to scattered applause.

'Ites. ITES!!!' called Bob. 'I-rie yunno. I and I play, uh, will play some music. I and I'll do "Slave Driver" yunno.' No applause. A great fast version of 'Catch A Fire' followed and again got no applause. On the scratchy videotape, Bob seems boyish, stoned and slaphappy. 'Dat was "Slave Driver" yunno. It seems as if you don't get the message . . . eh? So now you can't blame the youth, as Peter would say, so stop that train cos we're leavin'.' Wire's keyboard delivered an incredible yap of feedback and the band went into the tune, sounding as if they were playing three different songs at once, science fiction organ vamps drowning the Marley-Tosh duet. Then Bob again: 'So we're gonna get up, stand up for your rights, cos tonight's the night. Hi, how ya doin? How 'bout a smoke?' He turns to the band: 'Get up stand up fe ya right. Uunnh! FIYA!!' Carly blasted out a salvo and Tosh lit into his crazed whacketa-whacketa-whack guitar riff, and Bob performed an amazing, propulsive scat version of the Wailers' then-current theme, complete with a dubby drum and vocal recitation on the first verse and chorus. When the song crashed to a halt, there was a flicker of resentful applause. 'Ites yunno,' Bob said. 'I-rie.' And walked off. The compère tried to be nice – 'C'mon, put your hands together, make the boys feel good, thank you very much' – but it didn't help.

At the end of October the Wailers returned to Jamaica for two weeks of rest, and then immediately flew to England (minus Joe Higgs) to begin a quick tour of England to promote *Burnin'* and their single, 'Get Up Stand Up'/'Slave Driver'. It was the beginning of a bitter winter, and the Wailers shivered and suffered through the first part of the tour, Bob and Peter fronting the band as a duo. The first gig was at Nottingham on 19 November, followed by one-night stands at Bradford, Birmingham, Stafford, Blackpool, Liverpool (where they were supported by Chilly Willy and the Red Hot Peppers), Doncaster Outlook, Leeds Polytechnic, and Manchester. The show at Leeds Polytechnic was typical of the tour. The demoralized Wailers shuffled onstage in their street clothes and overcoats after Wire had tuned the guitars. The group exchanged a few grunts and played for forty-five minutes. At the end of the set they ran off stage, and then ran on again and played a short encore before calling it quits. The hall was only half full, more than on most of the shows on that desultory tour. Afterwards, backstage, Bob bewildered local journalists, including the *Melody Maker* correspondent, by refusing to talk about reggae and

delivering instead a long sermon concerning the divinity of Haile Selassie.

On 30 November, in Northampton, a freezing snow began to fall. Bob and Peter argued bitterly and came to blows, Wire freaked out and announced he was leaving the band to join the American folk singer Taj Mahal, and the tour broke up. The short set at Northampton was the band's last show. The next night's date at Leicester was cancelled, as were the ten remaining shows of the tour, including the all-important London showcase. The British music press was told that Peter Tosh had become ill and could no longer work. Earl 'Wire' Lindo left for San Francisco to work for Taj Mahal, and Peter and the Barrett brothers flew to Jamaica, followed by Bob after a few days in London and a conference with Chris Blackwell. At that point, only Bob Marley and Chris Blackwell knew that the old Wailers were finished forever. Bob Marley was taking over the band.

The epitaph for that era is best supplied by Joe Higgs, looking back after many years.

'The heavier albums were the earlier ones, *Catch A Fire* and *Burnin'*, dealing with experiences totally; confrontation, truth and rights, totally. No compromise: those first albums were really what was going down. You can only imagine those albums now, because that experience was not to be experienced any more, only to be thought of. You could only imagine afterwards what it was like to be sad. Those days . . . was what it is.'

6 · KNOTTY DREAD

Cos I feel like bombing a church/Now that you know the preacher is lying/So who's gonna stay at home/When the freedom fighters are fightin'? (from 'Talkin' Blues')

In 1973 Bob Marley sat for an interview with Neville Willoughby, the DJ who had introduced Bob to Johnny Nash six years earlier. Bob was still in low spirits from the aborted English tour, but he had been on the cover of *Melody Maker* in London the previous week, *Burnin'* was released and doing well, and his star was on the rise. On the radio he sounded young, angry and vibrant, and answered most of the specific questions with testimony on the divinity of Haile Selassie, sentiments not usually expressed on the air in Jamaica.

Asked how he had started out, Bob replied: 'Started out crying. Yeah, started out crying yunno. And then music becomes a part . . . because me grateful to *Jah*. From the beginning Jah created the start, yunnowhaImean?'

'Bob, you always seem to be aware of the suffering. You keep coming right back to it all the time. Would you say you are a bitter person, or angry?'

'Well, I-man sight up earth today, Neville, and when I-man sight up earth I notice that people are living under false pretence, majority of them yunno. And I know, seh, I and I don't 'ave fe suffer to be aware of suffering. So is not anger and alla dat, but is just truth, and truth haffa bust out of man like a river.'

'But Bob,' Willoughby said, 'I don't think you could fairly say right now you're a sufferer, in the sense of money.'

'Well . . . *hey!* Dig dis: I-man's a farmer yunno, and I-man don't live with money. Dem coulda never given I a penny I a-seh. I-man haffa live. But again, I-man can play music, and if money fe come out of music, *mek* money come out of music. My heart really open wide. I

bleed blood, forget money. For the t'ing is, Selassie I is the king of kings 'pon earth. Now, which rich guy 'pon earth rich like king of kings? So my father is richest man 'pon earth, so I is rich man now.'

'How long have you been a Rastaman?'

'From creation.'

'Explain to the people of Jamaica exactly what it means to be a Rasta?'

'I would say to the people, be still, and know that He is Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia is the Almighty. Now, the Bible seh so, Babylon newspaper seh so, and I and I the children seh so. Yunno? So I don't see how much more reveal our people want. Wha' dem want? A white god? Well, god come black. True true.'

'As a Rasta, what do you think of crime and violence?'

'Is laws cause crime and violence. Rasta don't believe in violence. Rasta don't believe. Rasta *know*.'

'Do you feel amazed with people who can't understand what you're saying?'

'I'm sorry for the people who don't understand, cos they be in great tribulation when they don't 'ave to. I personally now, my heart can be as hard as a stone, and yet soft as water. YunnowhaImean? Then again, still sorry for the people who don't know His Imperial Majesty. Is like my mother used to tell me yunno: "People head a-go chop off, and dem waan dead and cyaan dead, inna de judgment." *These days* are the judgment days. Only the fittest of the fittest shall survive. Like Marcus Garvey seh. And you know, so it go.'

Willoughby had noticed that the group was no longer billed as Bob Marley and the Wailers, and asked if Bob was still committed to the group. Bob answered carefully. 'Well, yes. The group is the Wailers. For some reason, dem [Island Records] seh Bob Marley and the Wailers. I never tell no one fe say that, from no time at all. But maybe fe some reason dem do it. Well, I-man is a Wailer. And so it rest.'

'What is the situation with Johnny Nash?'

'Well, dem gimme some money, and what happen is I sign a little agreement with dem and . . . *cho*! Is like, I no wanna seh anything bad about dem, and still me nuh have nothin' much good fe seh.'

Asked about 'carpet-baggers' like Nash and Paul Simon who came to Jamaica to make 'big money', Marley replied:

'Well, dem do something, these people out there, a-try kill we off, but couldn't do because dem people too wicked. Dem t'ing mek me vex, yunnowhaImean? Look how much good artist inna Jamaica and look what it tek for a guy like me a-go get some good recordin' done, and do a t'ing with it. That why we a-try and get our own studio, because we want to mek music without going through things involving social

classes. Dem try fe divide we in classes. Well, me no agree with. Is wickedness. Ya cyaan divide the people.'

'Do you have any hope in the country right now?'

'Hope in the country? Well, Jamaica is a nice great place now. Me really love Jamaica yunno, because me walk plenty stone land in Jamaica, plenty hills, but I think it really need a direction – not a big old signing up this and signing up that – but a direction of *our own country*.'

By 1974 the old Wailers had unofficially disbanded. The group, if it existed, had no manager and went on no tours abroad that year; they hadn't performed in Jamaica in two years. Some thought was given to the Wailers touring as a trio: Bob, Family Man and Carly, with Rita and her friends Marcia Griffiths and Judy Mowatt doing back-up vocals. But the idea was scrapped when Bob remembered how his other tours had failed without an experienced manager. Bob spent most of 1974 in the studio, perfecting the recordings for the album that would eventually become *Natty Dread*, though until it was released it was known as *Knotty Dread*.

The songs came quickly: 'Road-Block', 'So Jah Seh', 'Talkin' Blues', 'Knotty Dread', inspired by the political warfare that threatened Jamaica that year. Michael Manley was tightening socialism's hold over Jamaica, and the middle classes were squeezed the tightest. Jamaica was a place where every petrol-station manager had a couple of maids, a place where giant North American aluminium cartels carried off the raw bauxite earth for a few pennies a ton. Michael Manley was trying to change that, and the opposition fought back. By the early spring, political violence in some of the ghetto neighbourhoods got so bad that Manley declared a national state of emergency. There were tanks and troops in the streets of Kingston and a 6 pm curfew in Montego Bay. All violent movies were banned (including *The Harder They Come*) and the notorious Gun Court was established in Kingston, a wire-enclosed concentration camp for captured gunmen, situated in the heart of the city and painted blood-red for maximum effect. The Jamaican parliament mandated life sentences for anyone convicted of possessing an illegal handgun, or even a few bullets. The battle for Jamaica had begun, waged between the gunmen and goon squads of Jamaica's two political parties. It would be fought mostly in the slums of western Kingston, but its reverberations would eventually engulf most of the nation.

The first time Bob got caught up in it, he was riding back to Kingston at three in the morning, snuggled up with Esther Anderson and a spliff in the back of Lee Jaffe's rented Toyota, with cousin Sledger at the

wheel. They had been in Negril, where Bob and Esther were building a house. Esther still intoxicated Bob. Half white, half Indian, the Jamaican actress was both beautiful and intelligent. She was also in some demand professionally; her most recent role had been in *Warm December* with Sidney Poitier. Bob was proud that she was his girl. The house they were putting up was at a fishing hamlet presided over by a patriarch named Mr Pringle, who had twenty-three children; everybody in the area was named Pringle. As the Toyota rounded a curve near Mandeville and everyone was laughing about Mr Pringle, Sledger screeched to a halt. A police road-block was just ahead, checking Kingston-bound cars for guns and ganja. In a flash Bob's spliff and everything else combustible had been jettisoned from the windows and everyone was frantically fanning the air and trembling with shock. To get through the road-block, the car was strip-searched and Esther was pawed by a cop in Jamaica Defence Force fatigues. Bob and Sledger were reviled for their dreadlocks.

From then on, Bob spent much of his time at Harry J's, working on songs. Early versions of 'No Woman No Cry' were recorded and discarded. The group was just Bob, Family and Carly, with a sixteen-year-old named Bernard 'Touter' Harvey supplying organ in place of Wire. Lee Jaffe played the harmonica on 'Road-Block' and 'Talkin' Blues'. When dubbing in the harmonica part, Family Man would stand behind Lee and tap his shoulder when it was time to play. One tap meant play, two meant stop. No guitar parts were recorded; Bob and Family Man would find a guitar player in London later in the year to overdub the lead guitar lines. The trademark Wailers harmonies were supplied by Rita, Marcia and Judy. Bob was starting to refer to the women as full-time members of the Wailers; he called them the I Threes.

In May, singer Marvin Gaye, the king of the Motown Sound, brought a forty-piece orchestra to Jamaica to perform at the Carib Theatre. Because the show was in part a benefit for a new sports facility in Trench Town, the Wailers were asked to open for Gaye. The concert sold out quickly: Gaye was extremely popular from the days of 'What's Goin' On', and had a big contemporary hit, 'Let's Get It On'. For weeks rumours ran through Kingston that the Wailers wouldn't play. Although the group hadn't performed in Jamaica for some time their appearance was habitually advertised for dances at which the group never showed. But on the night of the concert, the three original Wailers and the Barrett Brothers gathered backstage at the theatre. A knife fight erupted at the stage door as Bunny was pushing his way into the building. Because Touter was deemed too young to appear in public

with the Wailers, Tyrone Downie played the electric organ that night. It was his first public appearance with the Wailers.

When the group took the stage, pandemonium broke loose. Bunny was at the left, barefoot, fully locksed, playing his timbals. In the middle, Tosh wore fatigues with sergeant's stripes and bell-bottomed jeans, a tam clamped down over his head. Bob was on the right, in a satin jacket, leather pants and high-heeled shoes, locks flying as he pranced about the stage with his guitar. The crowd was stunned by the awesome new Wailers show, a reggae-rock style the group had never before exposed in Jamaica. When Bob gave the first performance of 'Road-Block' that night, the response was terrific. '*Why can't we roam this open country/Oh why can't we be what we want to be/We want to be free/Three o'clock road-block – curfew/And I've got to throw away/My little herb stalk.*' Lee Jaffe was standing backstage with his harmonica in his pocket; he had played on the 'Road-Block' single that Bob was about to release, but he wasn't expecting to play that night. Just when it came time to play the harp solo, Skill Cole pushed Jaffe out on the stage, saying 'It's your turn.'

Bob walked up to the mike and said, 'This is Lee. Don't turn him up too loud.'

The crowd adored 'Road-Block'; the song was so current and the rhythm so hard that everyone identified with it. After the show, Bob was approached by Marvin Gaye's road manager, Don Taylor. Although Taylor was a Jamaican who had started out hustling for sailors along Kingston's waterfront, he had gone to America and had become involved with the music business, working as a valet and road manager for singers like Chuck Jackson, Martha Reeves and the Stylistics. Rapping out a fast-talking black Yankee jive, Taylor told Bob he wanted to be his manager, and bragged about his connections in the music world. Taylor told Bob that with his knowledge and contacts he'd guarantee to make Bob a big star. It was exactly what Bob wanted to hear. With a slick hustler like Don Taylor making things easy for him, Bob could concentrate on the music and beaming the message of Rastafari out into the world. Bob said he would think about Taylor's offer.

The Marvin Gaye show was the Wailers' last concert as a trio. 'Road-Block' was released on the Tuff Gong label shortly after the show, and became number one at dances and in the shops. The new sound – Bob's trilling, ethnic singing, the sharp kick of the rhythms, the I Threes wailing – was an instant hit with Jamaicans but anathema on Jamaica radio, too blunt and rebellious for JBC's conservative managers. Bob was furious: he had the most popular song in Jamaica,

but the radio stations wouldn't play it. The problem was the nature of Jamaican radio itself, which had been staffed mainly by foreigners and had changed little since the mid 1960s. The transistor revolution in the late 1950s had made inexpensive radios available to the general public but both RJR and JBC paid scant attention to Jamaican music.

Bob and Skill Cole got so angry they decided to take action. They rounded up Frowzer and Take-Life, two young killers who Bob used to say he was trying to reform, and went down to the JBC studio on Odeon Avenue to try to get 'Road-Block' some airplay. Skill had with him the baseball bat he occasionally carried as a club, and Take-Life began to clean his nails with his ratchet knife as Bob tried to reason with the terrified disc jockeys who were unfortunate enough to be around that day. Basically, Bob threatened the DJs' lives if 'Road-Block' wasn't played. So it was. 'Road-Block' was number one in Jamaica all summer. 'This is the best sound to have come out of the present Jamaican experience,' said the *Jamaica Daily News*, 'and those who have ears feel every word and every intonation.'

In June Bob, Family Man, Skill and Lee flew to New York, where Bob and Family were supposed to work on the new Taj Mahal album, *Mo' Roots*. Wire Lindo had been working with Taj, a young black folk musician who was turning away from the blues and getting into the newer Caribbean rhythms. Wire had done the arrangements for Taj's new songs, which included Bob's 'Slave Driver' and the Slickers' 'Johnny Too Bad'. The Taj Mahal/Wailers combination might have been wonderful – Bob and Family Man came prepared to play music – but Taj had already recorded his album by the time they arrived, and could only invite them to help him mix. Family Man overdubbed a piano part on 'Slave Driver' but the sessions were frustrating and no music was played. Everyone sensed a missed chance.

Back in Kingston again, work progressed on new songs, and 'Bend Down Low' and 'Lively Up Yourself' were resurrected. 'Them Belly Full' was being written in the studio, a collaboration between Bob, Carly Barrett and a long-standing Marley street-crony, Leghorn Coghill. Keyboards continued to be a problem, with Wire in California and Tyrone playing full-time with the Caribs, the house band at the Kingston Sheraton. Touter was acknowledged to be very talented, but he was too young and too inexperienced to endure the rigours of permanent Wailerhood. When he wasn't around, Family Man would play clavinet, organ or piano. As they were wrapping up *Knotty Dread*, the Wailers were profiled on the cover of *Xaymaca*, the Sunday magazine of the *Jamaica Daily News*. The photographer and layout

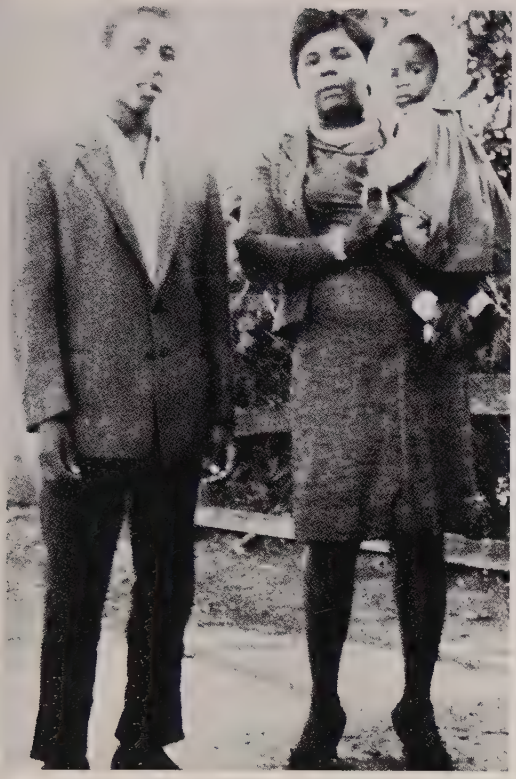
man was Neville Garrick, a Kingston-born designer who later became the Wailers' full-time art director. Although the article was published on 11 August 1974, it gave no hint that the original Wailers had broken up or were in trouble. Bob talked about touring: 'I love Jamaica and I love the people but I have to move up and down the earth. My mother tell me God is the father for the fatherless. So where he sends me I must go. No man can tell me what to do. I have seven children [the latest, Justin Marley, had recently been born to an Englishwoman Bob had met on the Wailers' last tour] and I would make a million tunes here and can't put my children in a room. I can't afford to make my children grow up like me. I love the brethren, and I love the children, but I can't afford to stay here and go to prison. That's the direction of the youth now. If Jah never worked it that I have to go outside and look certain things, maybe I would be in prison now.'

Later, Bob spoke of his dream: 'Too many people going on like only England and America are in the world. But there is a better life in Africa. I *feel* for Africa, I want to go there and write some music. Instead of going to New York, why can't we go to Ghana? Go to Nigeria – meet some black people, learn a new language. You see, people are only seeking material vanity. Black people are so stubborn. They stay here because white people give them a big hotel and a floor to vacuum.'

Early in August, Bob and Family Man took the tapes for the new album to London for re-mixing under Chris Blackwell's direction. As they left, Tuff Gong Records released the second single to emerge from the sessions, 'Knotty Dread', a fast litany of esoteric Rasta patois and a pilgrim's progress of the Trench Town cityscape: '*Then I walk up to First Street/And then I walk up to Second Street to see/And then I trod on through Third Street/And then I talk to some dread on Fourth Street/Knotty Dreadlock inna Fifth Street/And then I skip one fence to Sixth Street/I've got to reach Seventh Street/Knotty dreadlock congo bongo I . . .*'

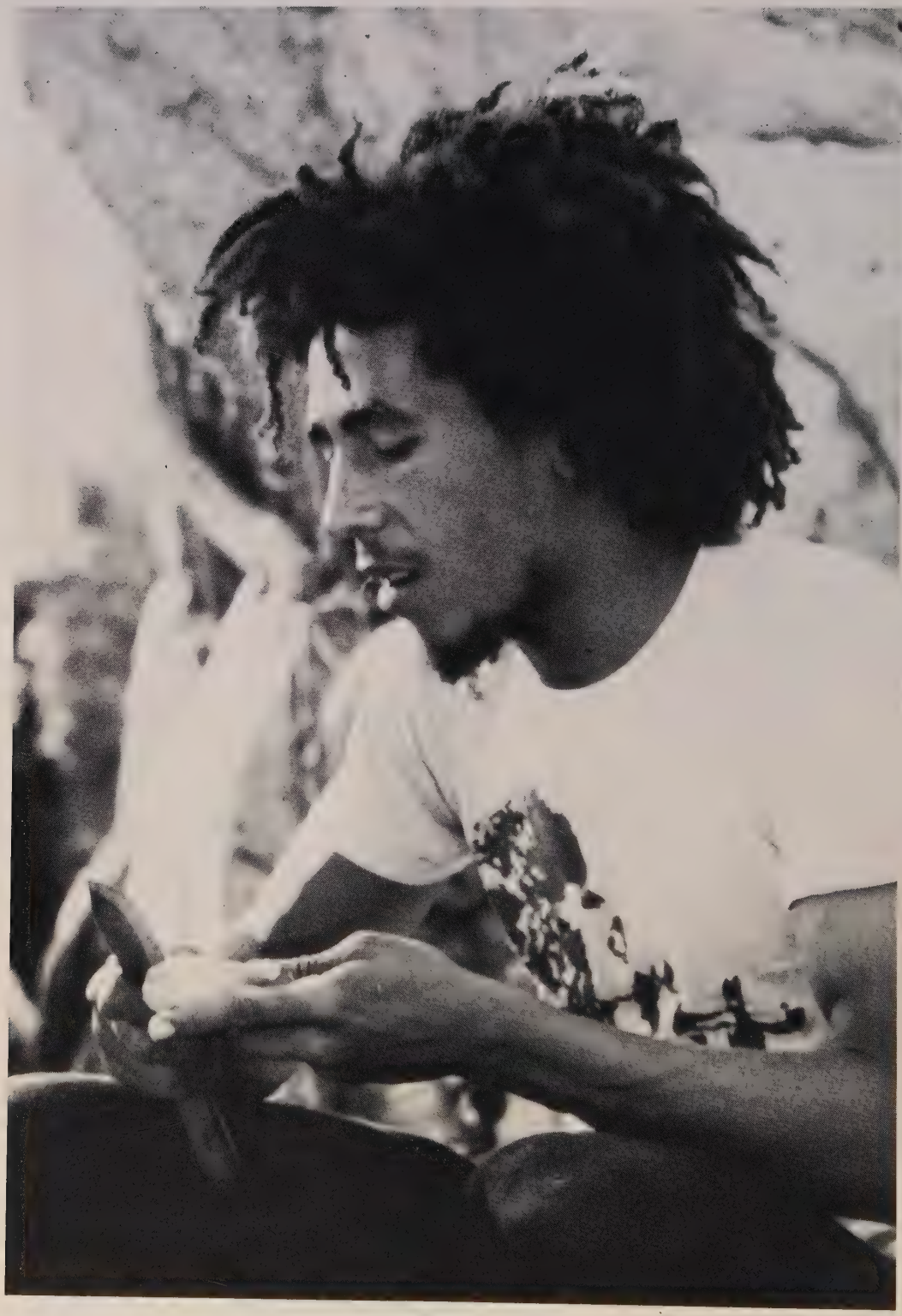
In London, the Wailers found a guitar player.

Al Anderson was a young black bass guitarist from America, born in New Jersey in 1953. His first band, the Centurians, covered 'Expressway To Your Heart'; his second, Red Bread, copied Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Beck. After recovering from a car crash, he took his savings to London, where he found a job playing bass for avant-garde folk musician John Martyn. Martyn was an Island artist; he introduced Al to Blackwell and asked him to give Al a break. One night Al was hanging out at the home of another Island guitarist, Paul Kossoff, who played for the rock group Free. Kossoff played Anderson the Wailers' 'Catch A Fire' to illustrate a point about reggae bass playing. It was the first time Al had heard reggae.

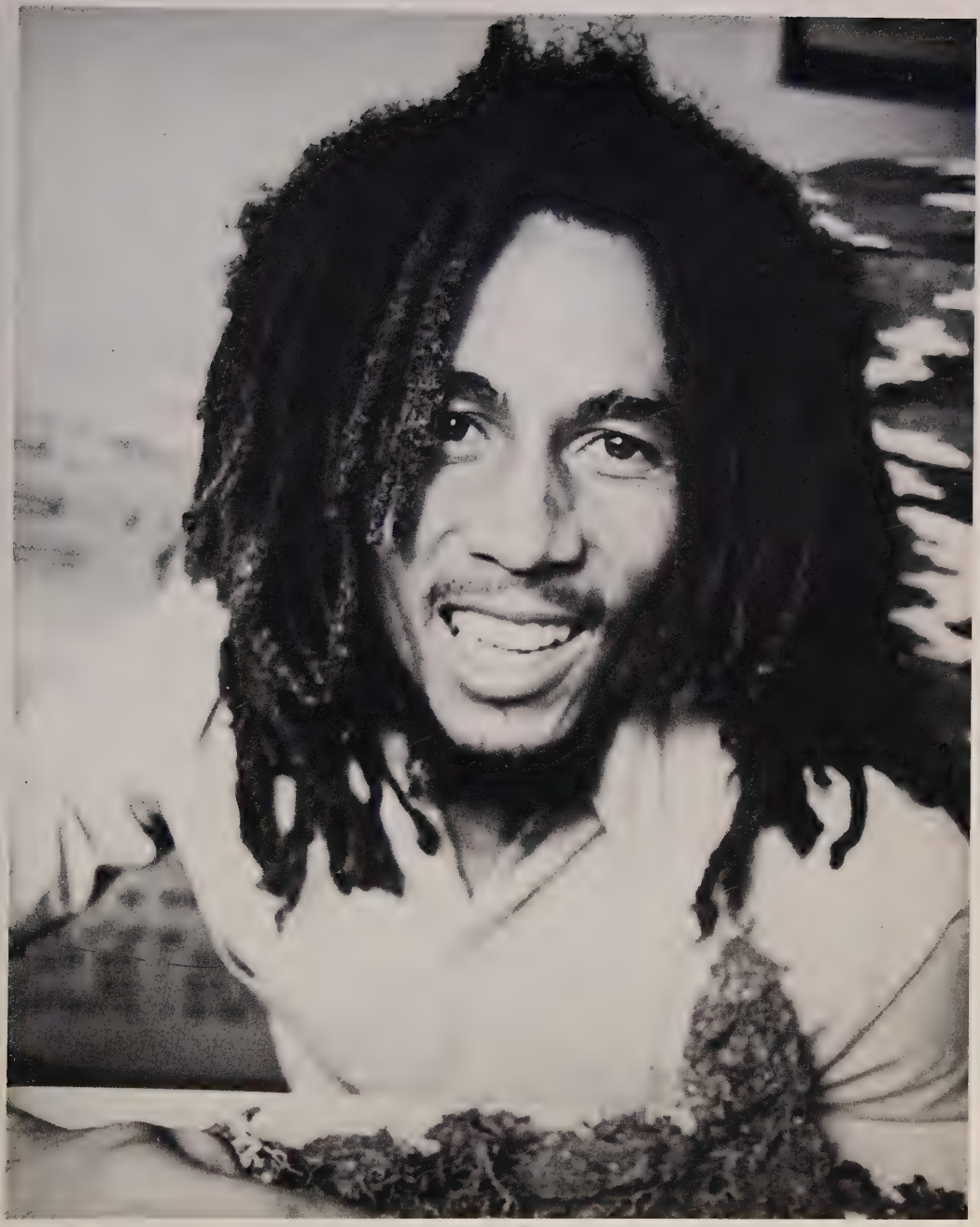


Bob Marley at eighteen, with his mother Cedella Booker and baby half-sister Pearl Livingston.

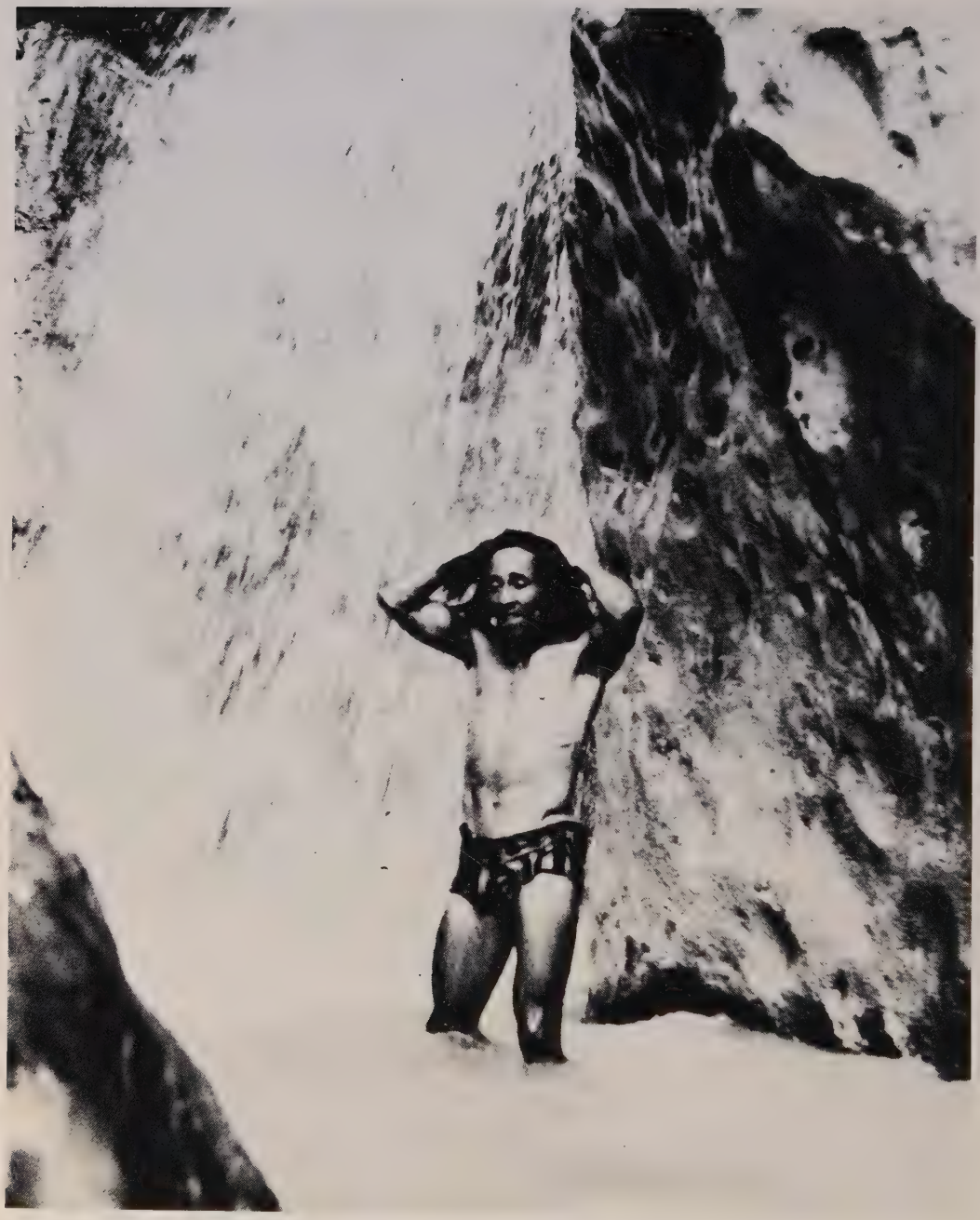
The Wailing Wailers, Bunny, Bob and Peter, in their Studio One days, 1965.



Bob peels a carrot in his new Bob Marley T-shirt in the yard at Hope Road, 1974.



Bob rolling a giant spliff, the only photograph for which he was really happy to pose.



A shower and shampoo for the dreadlocks under the waterfall at Cane River, 1974.

Right Rita Marley.

Bob in Battersea Park, 1975.

George Harrison visits Bob after the Wailers' show at the Roxy, Los Angeles, 1975.

Stevie Wonder sits in with the Wailers, Kingston 1975.

The I Threes: Judy Mowatt, Rita Marley and Marcia Griffiths.

Bob inspects his wounds a few hours after the attempt on his life, 3 December 1976.

The next morning, Blackwell called Al Anderson and asked him to ome to Island's Basing Street studio to play on a Bob Marley session. Al was ready. He had by then given up the bass and was playing lead guitar for Shakatu, an Afro-rock band led by the Nigerian master drummer, Remi Kabaka, playing the same circuit as the more famous Osibisa.

When Al showed up at Basing Street, he found Bob and Blackwell presiding over an overdub session. Al played some of his Afro-funk licks; Bob said he didn't like it. Al asked what he wanted, and Bob just said, 'Play the blues, mon.'

'It was really fun,' Al remembers, 'because when I first walked into the studio I was just a guy from the States with my hair all plaited up from the Afro-rock band, and I turn around and I see Bob and he's got a real knot-cap on his head. I got spaced out and said, hey, look at *this* cat. I had never even *seen* a Rastafarian before.

'And at the time I was doing a lot of alcohol, drinking, and was very unhealthy, and Bob was like . . . not a pimple on his face, not a wrinkle. He was into herb and I-tal foods and was totally healthy. I noticed right away that the guy was totally physically fit and conscious of everything that was moving. But I was just a session guitar player to him, and he was into finishing off his LP and going home. It was almost October and winter was coming and he wasn't into hanging around a day longer than he had to.'

Al Anderson's first session involved guitar overdubs on 'Lively Up Yourself' and 'No Woman No Cry'. Al played his best and was satisfied that his licks would be used; but after the playback Bob said to Blackwell, 'That's not what I wanted. It's not what I hear.' Anderson tried another take, and Bob still wasn't happy. Finally Bob turned to Al. 'He just said, "One, five, four – *blues*, mon." I said, "Okay, now I know where you're coming from." '

When the sessions were complete, Al Anderson thought he would resume his plans to visit Nigeria with Shakatu. But again he got a call from Blackwell, saying there was interest in asking Al to join the Wailers. Al was flattered, but felt confined by the reggae format and preferred to stay with Shakatu, where he had the freedom to play in the wide-open style he liked. Then one night he got together with Bob and the two musicians talked and jammed all night, riffing in the James Brown groove. Bob asked Al if he wrote any songs, and then played Al a new song he was working on: '*Stiff-necked fools/You think you are cool/ Tryin' to deny me/Of my simplicity/You 'ave gone from reality/And are provin' your love for vanity.*' In a corner, Family Man was fast asleep, with his ear next to a blaring radio.

'I just sat and talked with him that evening,' Al says, 'and we jammed, and I saw the guy had unlimited potential as a song-writer. He was so conscious and aware of what was going on in the world. I said, hey man, I've never *met* a cat like this. I was drinking heavily, really drunk, and he was into helping me. He said, man you have to get fit. Come to Jamaica, it's a different world from what you're used to.'

Al told Bob he would join the Wailers, and Bob and Family returned to Jamaica confident that they had a guitarist who could play the blues-rock music they wanted to spice their reggae for an international audience. Al imagined he would go to Jamaica and start work immediately. The new Wailers album was scheduled for release in November 1974, and Al assumed the Wailers would tour shortly after that.

Instead, Al was met at the Kingston airport by Bob, who took him to Rita's old house in Trench Town. Sledger and Leghorn were selling sticks of herb outside the front door. Al told Bob he was prepared to play right away, and Bob replied that there had been some problems with Island, and that the new album would be delayed a few weeks. Al wanted the Wailers to at least play some live gigs in Jamaica, but Bob insisted the timing wasn't right. For the first time Bob was under little pressure to tour: the composers' royalties from the Nash albums had started to come in. Danny Sims claimed this money alone made Bob a rich man. It would be another six months before Al attended his first full Wailers rehearsal.

In the meantime, he got a chance to live and learn, yard-style. 'When I got to Jamaica, I stopped drinking and got into physical shape. I got into I-tal foods and became a vegetarian. All this was Bob's influence. And the Bible was always around. He was totally into it. It was his life. He *lived* it. It was a real thing for him.

'I was in a funny position with the Wailers. I was the white cat in the band, the Yank, the American guy fuckin' up the music by playing loud rock and roll. Family Man was a big help, because he was the only one who sat down with me and said, "Hey man, it's not *chicka* its *cha . . . cha . . .*" Family Man was everything to me. It was Fams who taught me to play reggae.'

Even though the Wailers were relatively inactive throughout 1974, Bob's spirit was kept in the public eye by an incredible stroke of fortune. Other musicians had already been picking up Marley songs for their records; Taj Mahal thought 'Slave Driver' was appropriate to cover, and Barbra Streisand recorded 'Guava Jelly' and put it on her *Butterfly* album. But when Eric Clapton's recording of 'I Shot The

Sheriff' went number one around the world in the late summer of 1974, Bob's destiny was fixed. Clapton, formerly of Cream, was one of the major heroes of 1960s rock. For years he had lived in retirement as a heroin addict before deciding to clean up and make a comeback in 1974. That Clapton should choose 'I Shot The Sheriff' as the music for his rebirth was not fortuitous. Lee Jaffe had played the song for Carl Radle, Clapton's bass player, with the idea of Clapton doing the song. The version that Clapton produced didn't have much to do with the feel of Jamaican reggae, but it was a heartfelt version with a suspicion of reggae in the flailing rhythm guitars. The most Jamaican thing about it was the sentiment of oppression and rebellion: '*I shot the sheriff/But I swear it was in self-defence/I shot the sheriff/And they say it is a capital offence.*'

Eric Clapton's rock-god status now bestowed on Bob Marley complete legitimacy in rock circles. Karl Dallas later interviewed Bob about the message of the song, and he said: 'That message is a kind . . . of diplomatic statement. "I Shot The Sheriff" is like, "I shot wickedness," because all around in my own town they're trying to track me down. It's not really just a sheriff; it's just elements of *wickedness* yunno.'

What about the deputy? How does he come in?

'Well, the sheriff shoot the deputy. If he didn't shoot the deputy, the sheriff still have mercy. He just had to kill the deputy because the deputy's a good guy and there's still a hassle. But the elements of that song is, people been judging you until you can't stand it no more, you explode yunno, you just explode. So it carry the message. Coxsone asked me about that, because when Coxsone finish [hearing] the song, he don't know the meaning of it. He liked the type of music, and he like the melody, and he like [the title] "I Shot The Sheriff" yunno, but I don't know if him get it, because I think he thought he was hearing Elton John sing "Don't Shoot Me, I'm only the Piano Player". Bob Dylan sang, "*Take this badge off of me, I don't want to shoot them any more.*" And one man's aim shot the sheriff, yunno? That song now fit no one else but Eric Clapton, yunno? Right beside Elton John and Bob Dylan. Clapton seh him shot the sheriff. So you find, it's like dem guys, yunnowhaImean? *Categorized.*'

In Jamaica, Clapton's version was also a hit, played on both stations as no Wailers song had ever been. Again Bob and Skill were furious. Clapton's 'I Shot The Sheriff' was being played every hour on the JBC, while the Wailers' new single, 'Knotty Dread', was never to be heard. Again, Bob and Skill went over to the station to protest. One of the disc jockeys complained to the police that he had been threatened, and rumour said that Bob was banned from entering the station for two

years.

Late in 1974, something happened to sour relations between Bob and Chris Blackwell, and musician and producer fell out temporarily. At one point Dickie Jobson, who was managing the Jamaican operation for Blackwell, told Bob to vacate the premises of 56 Hope Road immediately. The Wailers feverishly packed up their equipment. Family Man and Lee Jaffe picked up a piano and hauled it into a truck. Their gear was driven over to Rita's house in Bull Bay until the fight blew over. But some damage had been done. The new album was postponed for a few months, and Bob even considered making another recording deal when Motown, the Los Angeles based conglomerate, made him an offer. However, he decided that Blackwell was the only producer he could trust with his music. When their differences were patched up, Bob made it clear to Blackwell that part of their next deal together would have to include the transfer of Island House to Bob's company, Tuff Gong. He didn't want to be evicted from Hope Road again.

The Wailers 'officially' broke up in January 1975. Peter Tosh and Bunny Livingston had been at the recent album sessions, but more as spectators than participants. The bitterness increased when it became clear that the group was again Bob Marley and the Wailers, that Bob had taken over the group. Much of Peter and Bunny's anger was directed at Blackwell, who they felt had persuaded Bob to dump them. Bunny and Blackwell had argued over the question of touring, and Tosh is said to have confronted Blackwell with a rusty machete when he asked for some money and was told that the Wailers owed Island Records $42,000 for their touring expenses. Tosh was also angry that his artistic role in the group had been suppressed. 'If you check the albums,' he said later, 'and you check how many songs Peter and Bunny do on those albums, you cyaan count dem on one hand! Raas-claat, you cyaan count dem on *haaf* a hand! One album with nine or ten songs, and eight songs are Bob. Tell the whole story right there.'

Bunny's case was slightly different, perhaps because of the brotherly nature of his relationship with Bob. It was clear to Bunny that he and Bob were trains on different tracks; while Bob had made a career out of songs of angry protest, Bunny's music preached quietism and active religion. While Bob was belting out 'Trench Town Rock', Bunny was singing 'Dreamland', a soothing Rasta ballad, or 'Sunday Morning' or 'Hallelujah Time'. Bunny's attitude toward the Wailers' schism tended to be more philosophical than Peter's: 'I don't really see it as a split,' Bunny said at the time. 'Although we are not working together physically, we're all sending the same message – *Rastafari*! So we're

together still and will always be together in that sense. . . . Every man had a testimony and a message, and there's so much inside one that it has to be brought out, or else it can hurt. Ideas that could have been good, dem become stagnant because you cyaan put out more than a couple of albums a year and so . . . it just happened. It wasn't planned, but it worked out that it was all for the good, because now all our material is being exposed. Bob has his album, Peter has his album and I have mine.'

So the three Wailers went their own ways. Bob, supported by Blackwell, kept the name of the Wailers and pursued his destiny. Peter followed his, lashing out with a furious spate of Jamaican singles on his Intel-Diplo label – 'Mark Of The Beast', 'Burial', 'Can't Blame The Youth', and later the ganja anthem 'Legalize It'. Bunny worked on his own songs and released his pastoral masterpiece *Blackheart Man* the following year, on Island Records.

In spring 1975 Bob Marley and the Wailers previewed their new line-up at the Jackson Five concert in Kingston. Bob was out front by himself with his Les Paul, playing rhythm guitar and prancing his signature dance, his knees almost touching his chin as if he was juggling a soccer ball. Then he would stand stock still before the mike, one finger resting on his temple as his other hand stretched into the smokey air in a gesture of preaching and prophetic intent. The audience was enthralled by the spectacle of the I Threes in red, green and gold head-dresses and gowns, chucking in unison and singing in harmony at stage right. Rita was in the middle, leading the harmony with her mid-range soprano. To her right was Marcia, a regal, large-boned woman who had been Jamaica's leading female singer for ten years. Marcia had been 'discovered' in 1964 by the ska-era Blues Busters, and had sung Carla Thomas' 'No Time to Lose' on Jamaican television. Influenced by Aretha Franklin and Dionne Warwick, Marcia opened shows for American soul stars in Jamaica, and enjoyed a string of hit singles produced by Sir Coxsone Dodd. With her singer-husband Bob Andy, she had recorded an album for Harry J called *Young, Gifted And Black* that was a big hit in Europe; she had spent almost three seasons touring in Germany by the time she joined the I Threes.

To Rita's left was Judy Mowatt, the I Three's choreographer. Judy was born in Gordon Town, outside Kingston, and started her career as a dancer, working in a troupe that travelled all over the islands. Her friends called her Julie Ann. By her late teens she was singing in a female trio called the Gaylettes, and later became friendly with both Rita and Marcia. When Marcia had a singing job at the House of Chin and needed backing harmony on a Diana Ross song called 'Remember

Me', she asked Rita and Judy to join her. Bob had heard that show, and decided that the three together made the sound he wanted behind him. Later, Judy recalled how the group came to be named: 'So while we were in the studio for the *Natty Dread* album, Brother Bunny and Brother Peter were in with Bob, not working with him, but in the studio. Well, we lookin' a name to call ourselves, and we said, "We Three"? Brother Bunny said, "No, call yourselves Heat Air and Water." But that was a much too harsh name, so we said no. We settled for the name "I Three". The I in the Three is HIM Haile Selassie I, who is that far eye who is watching your deeds. When you least think nobody is watchin', that far eye is watchin'. So the name is really *mystical*.'

The Wailers' third album for Island Records was released in early February 1975. The change in the group was a shock to hardcore Wailers' fans. The name of the album was a shock to Bob Marley. It had been originally titled *Knotty Dread*, after the single that Tuff Gong released in Jamaica a few months before. The word 'knotty' implied for Bob a jungle Rastaman, a natural, thoughtful man like his friend Countryman. Knotty was *dread*, a cultural agent-provocateur, spreading psychic terror through Jamaican society, even capturing its young. But Island Records called the record *Natty Dread*, which totally changed the meaning. To Bob, as he told a friend, the word 'natty' brought to mind a Rasta in a nice new cream serge suit with well-groomed locks, not the wild ropey locksman that Bob intended. But he was stoic about these things. 'That's the music business,' he would say.

The cover of the album told the whole story. Now it was 'Bob Marley and the Wailers' again, superimposed over an air-brushed painting of Bob's face and locks. The music inside was the Wailers' most sophisticated music to date. Although no less combustible than *Burnin'* or *Catch A Fire*, it seemed more dangerous for its stark reggae minimalist quality, a brooding anxiety that lingered after the fires of the previous albums had cooled. 'Lively Up Yourself' introduced Al Anderson's quiet blues guitar to Wailers fans, and reintroduced the horn section to the group's sound. The alto solo was typical of what Bob wanted from a reedman, a punchy, barely contained Hank Crawford style that seemed to burst out of the speakers. There was also the trilling Yoruba lookout call that started the album, Bob hailing the Wailers' new day like a rooster at dawn. 'No Woman No Cry' followed, a sentimental collage of Trench Town memories in a cheering, optimistic format. Bob later credited part of the song to his old friend Vincent 'Tartar' Ford from the kitchen on First Street. The Wailers then delved directly into trance music with 'Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)'. Competition for food was a constant problem in Jamaica and Bob

reminded people that '*a hungry mob is an angry mob*'. Yet reggae music could also be a balm for those weathered by injustice and poverty: '*Forget your troubles, and dance/Forget your sorrows, and dance/Forget your sickness, and dance/Forget your weakness, and dance . . .*' As back-up singers, the I-Threes sounded so perfect that one could almost forget that Peter and Bunny were gone. The single 'Road-Block' had been remixed and retitled 'Rebel Music (Three o'Clock Road-Block)'. Lee Jaffe's harmonica was now mixed up front, over a fine Barrett brothers 'riddim', extending the trance-like effect of 'Them Belly Full'. 'So Jah Seh' opened side two, a melange of scriptural quotation and ghetto defiance. It is Marley the provider and father of seven speaking. (As the album was released, an eighth child was on the way, to another of Bob's girlfriends.) Then 'Knotty Dread', followed by 'Bend Down Low'. The final two songs established Bob for ever as an artist-militant; the line in 'Talkin' Blues' about bombing a church caused a sensation in Jamaica. And 'Revolution' doubled the blow: '*It takes a revolution/To make a solution . . . So if a fire make it bu'n/And if a blood make it run.*'

In the past, open calls to rebellion had been punished by jail and the whip. But the Jamaica of *Natty Dread* was undergoing a socialist revolution, a movement in which even dreads seemed to have a place. Some even said Bob was the conscience of the nation. Perhaps because of this *Natty Dread* was a spectacular success, especially with the rock press in England and North America. People sensed in Marley's declarations a moral authority; the Wailers' reggae wasn't just empty, impotent pop music. Though most of their Euro-American fans did not grasp exactly what it was the Wailers stood for – the concept of Haile Selassie (deposed and discredited the previous year) as the black messiah and Almighty God on earth was too much for some – they liked the music, the show, the charisma and the sense of history and purpose.

After the album was released, the Wailers began to coalesce into the ensemble that would tour during the summer. Arranging and co-ordinating was the Wailers' new manager, Don Taylor.

Bob had consulted with his Jamaican lawyer, Diane Jobson, about Taylor. 'Him seh him wan' manage me,' Bob told Diane. 'But me earnin' a lotta money nuh; how can him manage me with him likkle bruk pocket?' Bob was concerned that Taylor hadn't the resources to be a professional manager, and just wanted to make money from Bob. He asked Diane to come to Taylor's flat to meet him, and there Don laid on his spiel: 'Bob, I just wanna be your manager, man, nothing else. C'mon on, man, we're *brothers*.' Right there Don sold himself to Bob. He told Bob he didn't want a contract, and Bob, who had been burned by every piece of paper he had ever signed, said yes. Later, he asked

Diane what she thought of Don Taylor, and Diane said that she didn't know much about the music business, but that if talking alone could do it, Taylor might be all right.

Once Don Taylor had been taken on, he organized a North American tour for June and July, followed by a short showcase tour of England. Bob set about solidifying the Wailers touring party, building around the Barrett Brothers, Al Anderson on guitar and the I Threes. Alvin 'Seeco' Patterson, the Wailers' old rhythm-master, was added as a percussionist, more a 'vibe' than a musician. The only slot then left to fill was the keyboards, a prime instrument in the Wailers' format. Wire Lindo was still with Taj Mahal, and Touter, who had shone on several of the *Natty Dread* tracks, was still too young to make an extended road tour. That left Tyrone Downie.

Tyrone was then with the Caribs, the semi-cocktail poolside group at the Kingston Sheraton. Bob had gone to hear the band with Cindy Breakspeare, his then girlfriend, and had loved Tyrone's playing and his voice, and had asked him to play on the Marvin Gaye show. 'That show came off really well,' Tyrone remembers, 'and it was my first live gig with the Wailers. At the time I didn't take it very seriously, but if I had realized what I was doing, that I was becoming one of the band, I would have treasured every inch, every moment, every second!' Now both Al Anderson and Lee Jaffe were pressing Bob to hire Tyrone for the tour. Touter was great, they said, but he was a 'pretty boy' type of musician, whereas Tyrone was a 'roots boy', someone who would make the players play reggae. Touter played his keyboards like a piano, Tyrone played his like a drum. They gave Tyrone a new name, 'Jumpy'.

By that time, Island House had been completely taken over by Bob Marley. Island Records was gone and Tuff Gong records had moved in. Rasta construction crews immediately started work on the place, transforming the outbuildings into rehearsal space and a recording studio for the ground floor of the house. Don Taylor ordered the building gutted and stripped of its old-fashioned sash windows, replaced by modern louvres which effectively ruined the house's period style. Even as the house became a construction site, Bob and his entourage moved in. It was like a Rasta encampment in the middle of uptown Kingston. Bob and Skill Cole were always around, playing football, rehearsing, writing songs. All sorts of musicians and hangers-on were in residence, doing physical training and arts and crafts, sharing meals, sleeping on the house's bare floors at night. Bob had his own little room upstairs, where he could sleep or meditate when he wasn't involved with a new girlfriend, or at Rita's, or with one of his

other lovers. Bob's attitude toward the concept of home was best summed up in a remark he made to Diane Jobson: 'Birds have their nest, but son of Jah has not a place to lay his head.' Upstairs, adjacent to Bob's room, was a verandah dominated by a table-tennis set. One of Bob's paramours in those days was Anita Bellnavis, then the Caribbean women's table-tennis champion, who bore Bob's eighth child, a daughter she named Kimane Marley.

In the spring of 1975 though, Bob's current girlfriend was Cindy Breakspeare, a statuesque twenty-year-old who managed a gymnasium and was generally considered to be the most beautiful woman in Jamaica. She later became Miss World. When Cindy and Bob became lovers, Cindy moved to Hope Road and Jamaica was scandalized. Here was the flower of Jamaica's light-skinned womanhood openly consorting with a revolutionary Rasta who, it was rumoured, smoked a pound of ganja a week.

Bob stirred up another controversy when he invited the Twelve Tribes of Israel to hold groundations and prayer-meetings at Hope Road. Known within the organization as 'Joseph', Bob was responsible for inducing many leading reggae musicians to join the Twelve Tribes. Freddie MacGregor, one of them, remembers the Twelve Tribes meetings during 1975 as the rock upon which his reborn Rasta faith was founded. But not all the behaviour at 56 Hope Road was so sanctified. The place attracted many of Bob's old crowd from Trench Town and Ghost Town who saw Bob as their spiritual leader. Few of them were Rastas; most were just former Rude Boys who had graduated into career criminals and killers. Bob liked to tell people he was trying to reform them, and whenever one would be arrested for armed robbery or murder, Bob would send Diane Jobson down to bail them out. '*Like a bird in the tree*,' he sang, '*the prisoners must be free*.' The scene around Bob was always very physical; there was lots of wrestling and horseplay. Once, Bob attacked Lee Jaffe, who wrestled Bob to the dirt and began to pin him. Suddenly Bob's pal Take-Life crept up behind Lee with a length of lead pipe, fully prepared to transform the back of Lee's skull to guava jelly. Just as Take-Life was about to take Jaffe's life, he was grabbed by Al Anderson, who managed to talk him out of it.

Bob also paid close attention to his radio show. By then, Jamaican radio had loosened up to the point that various reggae producers were allowed to sponsor fifteen-minute features of their own music. Bob's Tuff Gong show was a notable exception. While it generally played music by the Wailers, Peter, Bunny, Family Man or one of the I Threes, it also included any other new song that Bob particularly liked. Bob's was the first of these shows to send its own producer (Skill Cole)

and use its own jingles. Eventually the show was taken over by the engineer Errol T, who initiated a 'Culture Corner' consisting of scripture-reading, quotes from Marcus Garvey and some extremely bizarre sound effects. Bob was especially concerned that children listen to the show. 'Reggae music on radio musn't deal as a programme for people to enjoy as a musical t'ing,' he said. 'It must be an *educational* programme. That means I want to look forward to hear something 'bout all mankind's struggle for life. It can't be like, "Okay this is Bob Marley – this is John Holt – this is Dennis Brown." You must have content in this package.'

On Sunday mornings, Bob played soccer at Rae Town in eastern Kingston. If he was in Jamaica, he rarely missed that game. One fellow player remembers Bob from those games as 'like a tiger turned loose. We were on opposing sides and whenever he tackled for the ball, you could feel his intensity. As we played and grew weary at the height of the noon-day sun, unlike the rest of us he still seemed ready to play when someone was screaming extreme fatigue. Afterwards we retired for a groundation session at the bottom of Paradise Street. As we sat reasoning together, Bob sang softly, "*Sun is shining, weather is sweet*" . . .'

In April 1975 Bob and Don Taylor flew to New York to negotiate a production deal. Earlier, a company called Sire Records had sent Bob a demo tape by Martha Velez, a talented rock singer based in Woodstock, New York, asking if Bob might be interested in producing her new album. One of Velez's tunes, 'Living Outside The Law', caught Bob's interest, and he sent word to Sire that he was interested. Velez and the Sire executives met Bob and Don on a rainy day in early April. Despite the mild spring weather, Bob was swaddled in leathers from head to foot, dressed for bitter cold. He didn't say a word, letting Don Taylor do all the talking, but he quickly made eye contact with Martha, as if to say he thought they could work together.

Three weeks later, in May, Martha arrived in Kingston and was met at the airport by Don Taylor. Taken to Hope Road, she entered a darkened room full of reclining Rastafarians casually passing a burning chalice among themselves. At first Martha began to panic, and asked herself what on earth she was doing there. But then Bob emerged from the pride of dread lions and took her off to another room to begin work. First he played her some of his songs on acoustic guitar; 'Bend Down Low', 'Stand Alone', 'No Woman No Cry'. Bob told Martha that he wanted her album to sound international, so the two musicians began writing a song together that would eventually be called 'Disco Night'.

Then he got bored and went out to play football for a while.

The loose working conditions at Hope Road were sometimes frustrating for Martha. After three weeks in Jamaica, with Bob and Lee Perry producing, she had cut only two tracks at Harry J's studio. She returned to New York to confer with the record company, and then came back to Kingston to finish recording. This time, Bob got down to business. 'Sister Martha' went out to Negril to rehearse with the Wailers at a resort called the Sea Grape. When they returned to Kingston, the rest of the tracks for her album were recorded at Harry J's with Family Man and Tyrone Downie doing the arrangements and the I Threes backing. Martha remembers Bob being particularly harsh with Rita then, abusing her for any mistakes the I Threes might have committed. This was probably because the haughty Marcia Griffiths would have walked out if Bob had been rude to her, and Judy Mowatt had become involved with Skill Cole, and Bob didn't feel he had the right to yell at Skill's woman. So Rita bore the brunt of Bob's wrath whenever something happened.

Soon the backing tracks for the Velez record were almost complete. With the Barrett brothers and the I Threes, the tapes sounded a lot like a well-mannered Wailers album. Al Anderson overdubbed his understated guitar, sometimes replaced by Earl 'Chinna' Smith, Kingston's hottest young reggae session guitarist. Lee Perry did most of the actual production work on the record, and supplied some of his patented African percussive tricks. When the album was released the following year as *Escape From Babylon*, it included 'Bend Down Low', 'Get Up Stand Up', 'Disco Night', 'There You Are' (a retitled version of 'Stand Alone') and 'Happiness' (a retitled version of 'Hurting Inside') in addition to three other songs by Velez.

In June the Wailers flew to Miami to begin their American tour. Eight musicians made the trip (Marcia stayed behind because she was in the last stages of pregnancy; Rita and Judy performed as the I Twos), accompanied by the new Wailers artman, Neville Garrick, who would handle the lights. The group stayed at the Attaché Motel in Hollywood, Florida, rehearsing at a nearby hall while Neville Garrick built the red, green and gold Lion of Judah backdrops at the hotel. It was the usual Wailers routine for Bob: up before dawn, running and football on the beach, followed by a day of obsessive, perfectionist rehearsals for the band. To relieve the dietary problems the band had suffered on past tours, the Wailers brought along their own cook, Mikey Dan, a patriarchal Rasta who specialized in Bob's favourite foods – fish, stewed beans, peas and rice, cornmeal or oatmeal porridge, vegetables and

Irish moss, a combination of seaweed, linseed and milk. The tour was also joined by Don Taylor and two employees, equipment manager Dave Harper and Tony Garnett, a Jamaican-born disc jockey and fan from Los Angeles who served as court jester, master of ceremonies and road manager. Don Taylor ran Tony Garnett hard, sending him all over town to pick up equipment and make travel arrangements for the band. One day Bob noticed that Tony was looking rather lost. He said: 'Tell me sumpin. You ever been in dis bizness before?'

Tony answered, 'No, but me can learn.'

Bob thought for a minute, then said: 'All right. Cool runnings. Say what? What you 'ave fe say before the show? Ya got anything planned?' It was the first inkling Tony had that he was supposed to compère the tour.

The 1975 American tour began the media's long love-hate affair with Bob Marley. Everywhere they went, they were hot copy. Bob was a great story, a new kind of rock star, an obviously principled man who wore his hair like a Gorgon and used every interview as a platform to proclaim the divinity of the deposed Ethiopian emperor and the forthcoming redemption of the black race. In America *Rolling Stone* proclaimed him 'the dreadlocked, dark sorcerer-poet'; the *New York Times* hailed him as 'the Black Prince of reggae'; the *Village Voice* called him 'the Mick Jagger of reggae'. But Bob remained suspicious of journalists, though he seldom refused an interview, no matter how small or obscure the publication. He read all his press clippings avidly, and he was often angry at the misconceptions engendered by careless writers. Bob usually smoked a big spliff before his interviews; relaxed and high, he would often answer annoying or disrespectful questions with sarcastic queries of his own, and after the first five minutes many journalists would find themselves being tested by Bob on their own beliefs and values. When talking about Rasta, Bob would often consult and quote from the Bible he carried with him from motel to motel. His personal Bible was a Jamaican printing of the King James version, with a xeroxed portrait of the Lion of Judah in full ceremonial regalia pasted on the cover, and others glued on the inside cover and flyleaf. Written in ballpoint pen on the flyleaf were various Marley notations: 'Ethiopia is a mystery in the hands of God'; 'For great is the mystery of Godliness/ God is manifested in the flesh – JAH'.

The tour started with a showcase concert at the Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood, Florida, and then the band flew off to Canada. Although their popularity was growing, they played only night-clubs, mostly 400-seaters, and a few outdoor concerts. Again, some of their audience were white kids, but this tour brought out the Jamaican immigrant

underground, who crowded in beside the white youth and turned some of the gigs into pure Trench Town rock. From Canada, the tour progressed to Philadelphia, then to Boston where the Wailers played a sold-out Paul's Mall. The song line-up stayed the same throughout: 'Trench Town Rock' opened the set, followed by 'Burnin' and Lootin', 'Them Belly Full', 'Road-Block', 'Lively Up Yourself', 'Knotty Dread', 'No Woman No Cry', 'I Shot The Sheriff' (which was a big crowd-pleaser because of Eric Clapton's hit of the previous year) and 'Kinky Reggae'. The invariable encore was a long rave-up on 'Get Up Stand Up' with Bob going through twenty-five choruses before leaving his audience on their feet, emotionally spent.

Between shows Bob sat in the cramped dressing-rooms, holding court for American fans meekly offering stashes of Colombian marijuana and Jamaicans bantering with the band in rapid patois. Beautiful groupies materialized in the sweet-smelling smoke of the backstage area, and occasionally Bob would take one back to the motel with him. On 18 June, the Wailers played before fifteen thousand rabid fans, many of them Jamaicans, at the Schaefer Music Festival in New York's Central Park, a transcendent show that caused a near riot when the band left the stage. Spontaneous demand caused another show to be booked at the Manhattan Center, an instant sellout.

The new band was as tight as sunburned skin, thoroughly professional, taking pains to be precise. Bob rode Carly Barrett very hard that tour, often berating him backstage when he had rushed the beat or made an error. After New York, the tour headed for Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, where the group played a club called the Quiet Night and Tony almost broke his back trying to get Tyrone's Hammond B3 organ down the steep flight of stairs leading to the stage. In Chicago, Bob had a reunion with Junior Braithwaite, who had left the Wailers in Jamaica ten years earlier. At one show a huge gang of Jamaican Rudies refused to clear the club after the first set, terrifying the club manager who swore never to book the Wailers again. There were also problems between Don Taylor, who was respectful only to Bob, and the other musicians, who felt that Taylor was quick to belittle them. With Tony Garnett rather amateurishly handling travel plans and with just one roadie to drive the truck, unpack and set up the equipment, the tour was very disorganized; the musicians really hated Taylor for that. And sometimes, when Lee Jaffe came out of the wings to play his harmonica part on 'Road-Block', Taylor would come on stage and stand in front of him so Jaffe's whiteness wouldn't be so conspicuous. He would also stand in front of Tyrone Downie during Tyrone's solos, and sometimes Al Anderson as well. It drove the musicians crazy, and they complained

bitterly to Bob.

Everywhere there were interviews. In Boston Bob told the reporter from *New Musical Express* that Haile Selassie was 'ever young, the youngest man on earth. Him control time.' Asked about Selassie's being overthrown, Bob quoted Revelations: 'There shall be wars, and rumours of wars, even in Zion.' In other words, he didn't believe it. 'These are the last days, without a doubt,' he said quietly. '1975 is the last quarter before the year 2000, and righteousness, the positive way of thinking, must win, good over evil: we're confident of victory.' Many reporters asked Bob about the line 'I feel like bombing a church' from 'Talkin' Blues'; it was one of Bob's favourite subjects at the time. 'Politics and the church are the same thing,' he would say. 'Dem keep the people in ignorance, and Jah nuh gwaan come and seh, "I am God and you should praise me." These guys who preach are false . . . the greatest t'ing dem can seh is about death, cos dem sen you die and go to heaven after all this sufferation. To go through all sufferation for that! No, the greatest thing is life, man. *Life*!'

In the middle of July the tour reached California. The shows at San Francisco's Boarding House had been sold out for two weeks; outside the club, scalpers were getting $50 a ticket. When the lights dimmed and the band bore down – '*One good thing about music when it hits you feel no pain*' – the place went wild. With the intensity of an obeah man, Bob would stand frozen, singing with immense concentration, his outstretched forefinger sometimes pointing to his temple or the bridge of his nose. Then, as the beat began to surge and his energy burst its dam, Bob would explode across the stage, arms piercing the smoky air, face shining with perspiration and the joy of release. On other songs Bob concentrated on driving the band with his early-model Gibson Les Paul, lashing out hard reggae rhythm guitar, pacemaker to the Barretts' thunder-heavy locomotion. Audiences were ecstatic: the shows were described as 'tight, perfect and burning with passion and dark power'; 'in live performance . . . the Wailers surpass rational response'. Impresario Bill Graham was so impressed that he quickly promoted a last-minute Wailers show at the large Oakland Paramount Theater. The hall came within a hundred tickets of selling out.

The last stop of the American tour was Los Angeles. The Wailers had important showcases at the Roxy, a fashionable club on Sunset Strip, and were scheduled to videotape songs for their first appearance on network television in the States. The Wailers checked into a kitchenette motel on Hollywood Boulevard, and Bob changed into a new green Adidas warm-up suit and prepared to play soccer and meet the press. Road conditions improved also, since Tony Garnett was on his home

ground of Los Angeles. The motel quickly filled with fans and groupies, most of them bringing marijuana, mangoes, papayas, cherries, long skeins of dried figs, myriad health foods. The band was relieved at the replenished herb supply, which had been precarious in the Midwest despite the efforts of the hip little Jamaican communities in all the towns to keep the musicians refreshed. Tony G remembers that whenever the Wailers ran out and a pound had to be procured, the ganja money always came from Bob's pocket. In one of his Hollywood press chats, Bob told reporter Richard Cromelin that he had been smoking daily for nine years, with only a few periods of abstinence. For Bob, smoking ganja was neither frivolous nor hedonistic: 'When you smoke herb, herb reveal yourself to you. All the wickedness you do, the herb reveal it to yourself, your conscience, show up yourself clear, because herb mek you *meditate*. Is only a natural t'ing and it grow like a tree.'

Asked whether he considered himself a revolutionary, Bob proved himself more of a Rasta realist: 'You see, the revolution is a mechanical t'ing, you know. It's *them* planned it . . . if you plan revolution you can get hurt. Revolution *happen*. You know, it just happen and you see it happen around you . . . The only control you can have is if Jah really love you and Him take you from the revolution . . . The revolution'll go on, *harder*. Pure fightin', you understan'. It not like the Cuban Revolution type of revolution. Is the whole universe involved in this revolution.'

And the concept of his people's exile in Babylon?

'Anywhere devilism is, is Babylon. Babylon fill the air with bad vibes. The Devil ain't got no power over me. The Devil come and me shake hands with the Devil! Devil have his part to play, Devil's a good friend too . . . Because when you don' know him, that's the time he can mash you down. Him can-a trick you if you don' know him well, trick you and hide behind you . . . The Devil's a dangerous guy, mon. Is-a Jah goin' to protect me. He said, "Fear not, have no fear." '

Then he was asked if he personally feared anything.

'Me? Naah.' Then he reconsidered. 'Well, me don't swim too tough, so me don't go in the water too deep.' Around his neck Bob wore a large golden *chai*, the Hebrew symbol for life.

Don Taylor was chauffering the Wailers around Los Angeles in a rented Cadillac convertible, a huge Babylonian bus. One day early in July, Taylor drove Bob to the CBS studio at Studio City to tape two songs for the *Manhattan Transfer Show*, a four-programme summer series whose producers were Wailers fans. At first, Taylor demanded a closed set for the taping, in order to develop the proper atmosphere.

Uptight CBS officials, who had thought they were getting some slick soul brother and who had blanched when dreadlocked Bob Marley walked in, said no. The Wailers taped two songs, 'Kinky Reggae' and 'Get Up Stand Up'. The taping was done in one take, the Wailers playing a manicured reggae that clicked with the precision of an I-tal Las Vegas showband. When the show was broadcast a few weeks later, only 'Kinky Reggae' was seen, but it was another small triumph. It was the first coast-to-coast reggae TV appearance in America.

The shows at LA's Roxy Theater were the best of the US gigs. The 1975 Wailers tour ran concurrent with an American tour by the Rolling Stones, whose guitarist Keith Richard favoured a Bob Marley T-shirt for his gigs. The Stones had asked the Wailers to open their shows on the West Coast that month, but the Wailers' booking agent, Stu Weintraub, and Don Taylor made the difficult decision to refuse. Everyone felt that the Wailers were headliners and stars, and that stars didn't open shows for anybody. Nevertheless, the Stones skipped a party in their honour to attend the first of the Roxy shows. Also in the audience were two of the Beatles, George and Ringo, the Band, the Grateful Dead, Billy Preston, Herbie Hancock, Joni Mitchell, Cat Stevens, Buddy Miles, Bob Dylan's wife and a lot of movie stars. The Wailers burned that night with an especially bright flame.

On 16 July the Wailers were in London, installed in a flat in the King's Road, Chelsea, preparing for a four-date British tour to promote *Natty Dread*. Two shows were scheduled for the Lyceum, with subsequent shows at the Odeon in Birmingham and the Hard Rock in Manchester. Bob Marley was almost a national figure among British youth, especially young West Indians and their white sympathizers. Bob saw himself on the cover of *New Musical Express* when he arrived at Heathrow Airport. The frantic air of expectancy that anticipated the Wailers' shows in London was caught by journalist Carl Gayle for *Black Music*:

'Natty Dread is in town, the soul rebel from Kingston and Ethiopia, who, with his pride of culture and his uncompromising stance in music as in life, is breaking down the colour barrier. Is breaking down the barrier that has long prevented the acknowledgment of the power of Jamaican music. Is breaking down the barrier that puts you physically and spiritually in touch with your inner frenzy. His music has potential. It gets under your skin and into your soul and turns you loose.

'They will come to hear the music but not so much as they will come to see his face, the man and the image. To stand and watch him on stage as he puts himself, body and soul, through the various stages of emotion of which his music speaks. To watch him rebel and cry out and to be

hypnotized by it all.

'They're a little awestruck by the fire they've seen in his pictures and have heard in his voice, by his aggression and his beauty. And they would be more than a little ill at ease in his presence. But they've already been hypnotized, they cannot resist. So that when he tells them to lively up themselves, there will be no alternative, he's got them under his spell . . . And there's gonna be burnin' and lootin', weepin' and wailin' tonight. An atmosphere of carnal expectancy and of revolution tonight. Tonight, tonight!'

Despite all the adulation, Bob was annoyed on his arrival that *Natty Dread* had slipped out of the British charts, and he was unsure about the Lyceum shows, even though they had long been sold out. In rehearsal he worked the band extremely hard and was sharp with Tyrone and Al when they missed a cue or botched an intro. On the night of the first Lyceum show, Blackwell stood at the back of the theatre. As the Wailers came on the whole audience erupted in a loud blast of emotion. Bob stood for a moment, swaying and silhouetted before the Ethiopian backdrop, flanked by portraits of Haile Selassie and Marcus Garvey, until Carly tapped out the intro to 'Trench Town Rock' and Bob plunged into the show head first. '*Hit me with music/Brutalize me with music*.' When the Wailers hit the fifth song of the set, 'No Woman No Cry', and every person in the Lyceum sang along in perfect unison, Blackwell thought to himself, That's the hit; I've gotta record that live.

On the following night, Island set up recording facilities at the Lyceum. Backstage, black activists persuaded Tony Garnett to introduce the show by reading their poster protesting the imminent hanging of a young black man in one of Her Majesty's prisons. With Bob's approval, Tony G read the poster as the band waited on stage, and then said, 'But this, I wan' tell ya, is the Trench Town experience. All the way from Trench Town, Jamaica, Bob Marley and the Wailers!' Blackwell's tapes were rolling as the Wailers laid on a dazzling Rasta stage musical. Every song seemed an epiphanic poem of folk wisdom, and the band crackled like sheet lightning. Dozens of fans rushed the stage and stood with their arms outstretched, trying to touch the wild-haired prophet who hopped and darted above them like some captured African imp. Introducing the band during the dub passage of 'Kinky Reggae,' Bob finally identified himself, '. . . And I . . . I am Natty Dread!' The crowd screamed as Bob formally assumed the mantle of the visionary Rasta rebel, someone to believe, someone to follow, someone to feel.

The following Saturday, the Wailers travelled to Birmingham for that night's gig. At the sound check, Bob was again very rough on Tyrone, who was visibly unhappy. That night the Wailers went on at

9.15 and played for two hours, performing 'Talkin' Blues' for the first and only time on the tour. Again the show was a success, but the sense of strength and unity the Wailers projected on stage masked some of the dissent and unhappiness felt by some members of the band, especially toward Bob. Tyrone and Al were being paid a flat fee for the tour, and didn't really consider themselves part of the group. Carl Gayle discovered this when he accompanied the two youngest Wailers to the next day's gig at Manchester by train. In his usual hurried way, Tyrone voiced some of his complaints. 'The treatment that you get, you know. The way it seems is that the Wailers is really Family Man, Carly, and Bob, all the interest is in them. All I want to know is that I play music and really enjoy myself. And like if it wasn't for this cat now [referring to Al] I would be strung out.

'I wouldn't come on the tour y'know cos Family Man check me fe come and I said I wouldn't because if I don't get pay in Jamaica I don't think I would get pay abroad. Bob say you mustn't deal with money man, you must play music and build something. That is the usual argument you get in Jamaica right now when a man want you work fe him.

'Wailers going mek it you know cos at least they are accepted by the world. All they have to do is keep doing the same type of material. Cos is strictly commercial, the way I see it right now. The thing with Bob is that I like the guy. His music saying something ya can sing. Who wouldn't want play with a guy like that? But the things you have to go through man, mental strains you know . . . Bob get everybody tense because . . . I don't know, him won't relax himself. The thing is he's worried about if the show going come off all right. If the music going sound heavy when showtime come. But him really no have to worry because the group heavy already. The sound is already there. But him just tense and nervous and just rub it off on everybody else.'

Later, after the tour had ended and some of the pressure was off Bob, Carl Gayle asked him about the tensions within the group. Bob said: 'Me no get tense, me just tighten up because the music me play, me want it to be something someone can really concentrate pon. Not something where you just come play anything you want play, you know. Is a music where sometimes if you fool around too much it no sound good. You have to be directly inside o' it with all o' we a work right. So me just a tighten up, is not really tense. If you laugh, laugh too much everything just go in a little vain way. Somebody 'ave to tighten it up, 'ave to be like strict sometimes. And after the show over we cool again.

'Like Al and Tyrone might take a little time fe understand. Like the

fact what me have something me really mean war. When is music time me serious. Just so me stay, we no in a joke business.'

Asked why Peter and Bunny had been left behind, Bob's answer was frank and strangely prophetic:

'Is like them don't want understand me can't jus play music fe Jamaica alone. Can't learn that way. Me get the most of my learning when me travel and talk to other people. That was a kind of worry me have, why me never so loose before. They can be a part of the group but me 'ave fe leave Jamaica certain time because of politics in the air. The influence from politicians we have is strong. Them love come to you and try get you, and me is a man no like turn down no one. So me leave Jamaica.'

About the same time in London Bob talked to R. A. Allen of the *Caribbean Times*, and displayed some interesting, sometimes contradictory, attitudes. After telling Allen that he was born in 1948 and denying that he was married – 'Me never believe in marriage that much . . . marriage is a trap to control men; woman is a coward. Man strong' – Bob became offended when asked his views on homosexuality. 'Sodomy?' he snorted. 'Me nuh waan deal wid.' Asked if he admired any woman, Bob said he liked 'dat woman in America . . . Angela Davis, a woman like that who defends something; me can appreicate that.'

On his identity, 'Bob Marley isn't my name. I don't even know my name yet.'

On race prejudice, 'Well, me don't dip on nobody's side; me don't dip on the black man's side or the white man's side. Me dip on *God's* side, who cause me to come from black and white, who give me this talent.'

On his way home to Jamaica after his conquest of England, Bob stopped off to see his mother. He used the interlude to work on new songs for his next album, tunes like 'Cry To Me' and 'Rat Race'. For several months Bob had been working with the text of a speech that Haile Selassie had delivered to a UN assembly in California in 1968, trying to craft Selassie's trenchant warning of war and struggle within the context of the Wailers' music. He also began thinking about other songs, like 'Natural Mystic', which wouldn't be recorded for years.

By mid August Bob was back at Hope Road, cutting the rhythm tracks for the Wailers' next album at Harry J's and at the studio run by veteran Jamaican producer Joe Gibbs. It was in the middle of these sessions that, on 27 August 1975, Haile Selassie died in a small apartment of his former palace in Addis Ababa at the age of eighty-three. Immediately there was a furore in Jamaica, where the question of

the Emperor's divinity had been hotly debated for forty years. The doubters laughed, and the faithful Rasta again pointed to Revelations: 'There shall be wars and *rumours* of wars, even in Zion.' At Hope Road there was some confusion, and some of the brethren wavered in their belief. Bob Marley stood firm. Late one evening in September, Bob and Lee Perry commandeered Harry J's, filling the dimly lit studio with ferocious concentration and cumulonimbi of ganja smoke. When the studio clock showed 10.30 pm, Bob stepped up to the boom mike suspended above his head and matched a poem of deep religious affirmation to the heart-stopping rhythm track the Barretts had earlier laid down: '*Jah Lives! Children yeah!/Jah Jah Lives, children yeah!/The truth is an offence, but not a sin/Is he who laughs last, is he who win/Is a foolish dog, bark at a flying bird/One sheeple must learn, children, to respect the shepherd/Jah Live . . . Fools saying in their heart/Rasta your god is dead/But I and I know, children, dread shall be dread, a-dread/Jah Lives.*' By the time Bob finished, his brown cotton shirt and jeans were soaked to the skin. The next morning, Al Anderson was brought in to overdub a guitar part, Lee Perry dubbed in percussion, and the I Threes recorded a stupendous harmonic chorale to back the track. A few weeks later 'Jah Live' was released (by Tuff Gong in Jamaica, by Island in England), credited to 'Hugh Peart'. Yet few people doubted that most of the song was Bob's, his response to the reported passing of His Imperial Majesty. 'Jah Live' was never released in America, though it was widely available in Jamaican communities as an import. Nor was it available on any Wailers album during Bob's lifetime.

Early in September, Bob gave a rare Jamaican radio interview to JBC's Dermott Hussey for broadcast on Hussey's weekly cultural programme. Candid Marley was; he described some Jamaican musicians as cheap hustlers and spoke heatedly on the disbanding of the old Wailers as an inevitable event brought about by the invisible laws of change. He told Hussey that he received his inspiration from three main sources – Haile Selassie, the love of his mother, and all the people who were against him. He explained that he turned struggle and confrontation into a positive vibration by writing songs like 'Road-Block' or 'I Shot The Sheriff' about people who vexed him. When the interview had been broadcast, Bob asked Hussey to destroy the tape.

As the sessions for the new album continued through October, Bob commuted between Hope Road and the studio on nearby Roosevelt Road. At home he kept his children close to him, mingling his three by Rita with Pat Williams' son Robbie and other children by other women. His guitar was constantly at hand, a tiny photo of Selassie and a map of Africa taped to the soundboard. After the *Jamaica Daily News*

published a series about destitute and starving ghetto children foraging for food at the Kingston dump, Bob wrote a song called 'Children Of The Ghetto': *Children playing in the streets/On broken bottles and rubbish heap/Another little baby got nothin' to eat/Cause in the ghetto, bitter is sweet.* One day, Bob said, he would gather all his children into a group and have them record that song, so they would know from where their father had come.

But Bob's children didn't have to worry about scavenging for food. Their father was now a rich man and an international star, at once basking in the positive glow of his new fame and wary of any effects his new wealth and raw cultural power were having on his fellow Jamaicans. Bob had come of age in a Jamaica of mistrust and violent competition. He knew that most successful Jamaicans didn't stay on the island of their birth and heritage. Circumstances forced them into a more comfortable exile.

In November Island released the album Chris Blackwell had recorded at the Lyceum, *Bob Marley And The Wailers Live!* Now the whole music world heard how stupendous those gigs had been, and the album did as much as *Natty Dread* to boost Bob as reggae's prime shaman. *Live!* had it all – the convulsive reggae anthems, the fiery scat and interpretative singing, the huge crowd singing along in unison and screaming for the truth and redemption that only the Wailers could deliver. There was the climactic jam on 'Get Up Stand Up' and Bob's bellowed incantation, 'Rastafari – *Almighty God!*'

Later that month, the three original Wailers joined forces for one final concert at Jamaica's national stadium. The occasion was a benefit concert by Stevie Wonder on behalf of the Jamaican Institute for the Blind. The Wailers went on at two in the morning with 'Rasta Man Chant' and the packed stadium roared in appreciation. Peter Tosh got riot cops from Harman Barracks moving out of the stadium with 'Mark Of The Beast' and Bunny played his new song, the timely 'Arab Oil Weapon'. Then Bob and the new edition of the Wailers did their current show, joined in the end by Stevie Wonder, dressed in his stage costume of dozens of tinkling silver bells. As the moon began its descent to the west, the black Yankee soul star and the Jamaican soul rebel jammed on 'Superstition' and 'I Shot The Sheriff'. The show was over at 4 am, and Bob Marley was ecstatic. For an encore the three original Wailers came out and did 'Rude Boy'. It was the last time they would perform together.

7 · SMILE JAMAICA

Feelin' up/Feelin' down/This feeling wouldn't leave me alone/Then I came 'pon one that said/Hey Dread/Fly Natty Dread! (from 'Smile Jamaica')

1976 was, in record parlance, the year the Wailers 'broke'; they were in constant demand for concerts, advance orders for their new album flowed in, and *Rolling Stone* magazine voted them Band of the Year. Thousands of young Jamaicans stopped combing their hair and started to think the Rastas might be right after all. And their leader was Bob Marley. His dark prophecies of vengeance and revolution seemed all the more immediate in January 1976, when the Manley government hosted the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund, and the western ghettos of the city went up in burnin' and lootin' in full view of the IMF delegates staying in high-rise hotels in New Kingston. Convinced the rioting was a JLP plot to embarrass and destabilize his socialist regime, Manley declared a curfew and dispatched troops to put down the disturbances. Marauding gangs of criminals and political thugs now took to the streets after dark, and even the tough Kingston police tried to stay off the streets at night. At seven o'clock, Kingston was shut down and locked in, a city of fear. '*War inna Babylon*,' Max Romeo sang, '*War inna Babylon – it sipple* [slippery] *out deh*.' Another big reggae hit of the day was 'Jah Kingdom Go To Waste'; both songs were banned by the worried Jamaican government in an effort to keep inflammatory songs off the radio. Jamaica was in trouble, but it really wasn't anything new. Bob had been saying it for years.

At ten o'clock on an early March morning Bob was just waking up at 56 Hope Road. He had been up late the night before, working on the new album at Harry J's. In a few hours the press officer from Island Records, Jeff Walker, would be bringing another carload of American reporters for a press conference.

Wearing only a T-shirt and cut-off jeans, Bob shook out his locks and wandered downstairs, settling on a large rock under a huge poinciana tree. Absently, he signalled for his morning spliff and a nearby herbsman handed him a large one, neatly rolled into a seven-inch cone. Within minutes a woman had brought out herb tea and fresh fruit, and the motley crew of Rasta craftsmen had begun the day's labour on the house, whose interior was being repainted in red, green and gold. Portraits of Haile Selassie were tacked to most of the walls. A telegram arrived, and Bob tipped the delivery man with a spliff. After a while, Bob walked over and sat on the bonnet of his latest purchase, a sleek silver-blue BMW Bavaria that he had paid $15,000 for. Originally he hadn't wanted anything so grand, worried that it might not look right for a Ghost Town rasta to be driving a big BMW, but Skill Cole had argued that it would be good for the weekly treks to the herb fields up in St Ann, whose dirt roads had destroyed most of the other cars Bob had used. Sitting regally on his car, Bob held court. Each day saw a constant stream of destitute old friends and hangers-on from the ghetto, each of whom got five or ten dollars depending on his needs. Some of them had bigger scams they wanted Bob to finance, dope deals and swindles on the Babylonian economy. Always interested in a good scam, Bob listened to them all. Not many got what they wanted, but some did. All this took place to a background roar of Honda CB200 motorcycles racing in and out of the property and the relentless throb of the Tuff Gong sound system, which broadcast through loudspeakers the city's Rudest reggae to its wealthiest district at all hours of day or night. Over the door to the kitchen was a sign: PLEASE TAKE OFF YOUR SHOE OR WIPE FOOT.

I was among the swarm of foreign reporters who descended on Kingston with assignments to write about Bob Marley and the social changes sweeping Jamaica that March. Bob took the interviews individually, a laborious process since he tended towards lengthy bouts of Rastafarian philosophy and faith with each journalist. So the reporters from *Time*, *Rolling Stone*, *Melody Maker*, the *New York Times Magazine*, German and Dutch television and various other music and skin magazines were left to drink rum round the pool of the Sheraton. The more enterprising of them rented cars and ventured on to the fringes of Trench Town, with the doors locked and the windows rolled tightly up for security, even in the glare of the tropical sun. Trench Town wasn't happy to be gawked at – 'No wan' you come col' I up' – and the reporters' Datsuns were invariably pelted with rotten fruit, Red Stripe bottles and stones.

Bob regarded interviews as an important part of his Rasta ministry,

and he generally approached them with great earnestness, intending to use them to spread the message of Rasta in his music. His seriousness was often rewarded with dozens of questions regarding his hair, the amount of dope he smoked, and whether he really wanted to go back to Africa. Bob usually countered these reporters by quoting from the Bible, his own lyrics, and Jamaican street sayings of the time. In 1976, with the *Rastaman Vibration* sessions under his belt, he quoted most heavily from the fiery Haile Selassie speech which he and Carly Barrett had set to music for the next album.

It was my turn for an interview with Bob late on a Monday afternoon. That same day he had already talked to *Time* and *Melody Maker*, and had spent an hour with *Time*'s photographer Dave Burnett, who had made Bob run around with his guitar under his arm, trying for a special-effects shot that would be spread across several frames of the film. Bob ran back and forth for the photographer, much to the general hilarity of those present, until he was tired out. When another intruding white photographer asked Bob to move into better light, Bob replied that if the man wanted him in a different place, he'd have to come back another day; and when the same man asked him to take off his hat, Bob took a draw from his spliff and looked into space until the hapless nuisance slunk off. Sitting on his car, dressed in denims and leather boots, Bob flicked the ash from his spliff as he patiently answered questions, distracted occasionally by the shouts of his children and the squall of motorbikes revving up in his yard. As the late afternoon passed into evening under the big shade tree, the tree toads and crickets came to life in the branches, a chorus of bug song and scree. Bob Marley, his features a mask except when he laughed, took a cheek-hollowing draw of his ganja cigar and waited for the next question.

What message, I asked, did he think he was giving the hordes of press people crowding into his life these days?

'Well, me have a message and me wan fe get it across. The message is to live. My message across the world is *Rastafari*. "Righteousness shall cover the earth like water covers the sea." Right now, no one teachin' the *real* way of life. Right now the devil have plenty influence, but as far as me is concerned, all the devil influence lead to is death. While Jah lead to life.'

Was he surprised to be asked so much about Africa?

'Yeah man. Rastaman must go home to Africa. It sound funny to some people sometime; sometime it can sound like a mad t'ing, but our desire is fe go home to Africa. We like Jamaica yunno, but Jamaica is spoiled as far as Rastaman is concerned. The history of Jamaica is spoiled, just like if you have an egg that break, ya cyaan put it back

together again. Jamaican cyaan be fixed for I and I, for Rastaman. When we check out the system here, we see death. And Rastaman seh, life. Here people have to fight for everything. Ambition and false pride. Dem people a coward.'

What about criticisms that he was selling out his culture?

'Check this,' Bob said, quoting Haile Selassie: '"Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited, and abandoned, there is *war*." Jah say dese t'ings. Me check them out to the people. If God hadn't given me a song to sing, then I wouldn't have a song to sing. Ya cyaan sell culture . . . I'm dealing with universal togetherness.'

There was talk of another election soon in Jamaica. Was Bob worried that the politicians might try to use him? Especially the Manley government?

'Only one government me love – the government of Rastafari. Politicians don't care for people; only Jah care for people. Seh, every man for himself, and God for us all. Politician cyaan fall rain, dem cyaan mek corn, yunnerstand? The only unity we wan' get is Rasta.'

After relighting his dormant spliff, Bob launched on a fragmentary meditation on the kinds of music he liked:

'Rock music, soul music . . . every song is a sign. But you 'ave fe be careful about the type of song and vibration that you give to the people, for "woe be unto they who lead my people astray".

'People rob me and try to trick me. You cyaan call it trick, you call it *teef*. But now I have experience, now I and I see and I don't get tricked. Used to make recording and not get royalties . . . still happen some time. Alla dem English companies, *rob*, man. Dem wha' deal with West Indian music, pure *teef*-dem.

'Me love I Threes, me love Burning Spear, me love Big Youth. All Jamaican music . . . Me love dub, if ya can tek it. I nuh really get involved with it so much. Live more 'pon the creative side. For Wailers, dub means *right and tight*, the perfect groove. When we seh to our musicians, we gonna dub this one, we mek sure we play it right and tight.'

There was talk that Michael Manley would legalize marijuana in Jamaica. Did Bob believe it?

'Herb is the healin' of the nation. Manley can say whatever, but police still get their order from somebody. I mean . . . there are people who live in evil and think it is right. For instance now, a Rastaman siddung and smoke some herb, with good meditation, and a policeman come see him, stick him up, search him, beat him, and put him in prison. Now, *who is this guy doing these t'ings for*? Herb just grow, like

yam and cabbage. Policemen do it for evil. Dem don wan' know God and live, dem wan' ha' fe dead yunno!'

What about the question of an artist's inspiration?

'Well, it is good to think good of yourself, and good of others. Inspiration come straight from out of Jah, man. Yeah man. *Yeah man.* Ya just' a fe live right. The ship rock, but we still steady.'

In the violent political climate of the moment in Jamaica, did Bob fear for his safety?

'No sah! No mon! Me nuh afraid fe dem. If I can avoid dem I avoid dem. If I'm goin down the street and I see a road-block and there's a street for me to turn off before the road-block, ya bettah go an' turn off. It's good not fe get search.

'Now if somebody wan kill I, if somebody wan try and hurt I, than I and I mek him hurt I, and if the only thing I can do is defend I-self, then I'm the one. *I'm the one and let no one on it.* Rasta *physical*, yunnowhaImean? We nuh come like no sheep in dem slaughter, like one time. YunnowhaImean? Dem just don't have power fe do certain things to I and I. Dem just don't have it!'

The conversation wore on as it got darker and Bob's spliff got shorter. Asked about the future, he became animated and articulate, attracted to prophesy:

'I and I reason, ya watch what a-gwan happen. It nuh tek long. I cyaan explain it because if me 'ave the power fe explain it I explain it and people will try and stop me. Me *know* it gonna happen. Reggae gwan get a real fight if it nuh happen already. This is *Third World* music . . . Ya don't have understanding in one day; ya have it little by little and it just grow.'

By then it was past twilight in Bob Marley's yard, and over the horizon a sliver of waxing moon shone like a street lamp. As we conversed, dark figures gathered in the shadows around the car under the big tree, listening intently as Marley spoke. A beautiful young black woman pressed in, concentrating on Bob's discourse with the foreigner. The still air was filled with crickets and smoke; in the big house lights were on, and the aroma of the evening meal being prepared wafted out on to the courtyard. After an hour more of chat, Bob leaned back on the bonnet of the BMW and closed his eyes. His role was then taken over by a proselytizing young brother from the Twelve Tribes of Israel organization, who had been sitting at Bob's feet and feeding him lines and catch-phrases during our interview. The brother proceeded to challenge me on my negligible knowledge of scripture, arrogantly demanding to know how long it takes to read the Bible a chapter a day. When I said I didn't know, the brother snorted that it takes three and a

half years. Bob woke up again: 'Read the Bible, man. Most populous book in the world.' I said that for some people it was a big decision to come back to the Bible, and the Twelve Tribes brother pointed out with irritation that all it took was your ears. Bob sat up and agreed: 'Read the Bible, man. Certain t'ings ya 'ave fe know what to do, ya read the Bible.' After I said my thanks and farewell, I was followed out of the yard by the Twelve Tribes brother, who was offering some herb for sale. As I turned to talk with him I saw Bob Marley, still stretched out on his car under the tree, still surrounded by his disciples affectionately watching over his slumber.

In the dozens of other interviews Bob gave that month, he kept hammering at the same themes: the evils of the system, the black redemption offered by Rastafari, the sweetness of herb, Haile Selassie's 'Until the philosophy' speech, bad writers who misinterpreted him (although he also claimed that he wasn't eloquent enough to explain his true feelings), and his constant battle with the Devil. He was also revising his own history, telling some reporters he was born in the late 1940s and saying that his jail term back in the 1960s was for driving without a licence. There was no point in alerting immigration authorities with replays of his old dope bust. Many writers looking for the *real* Bob Marley drew a complete blank, because the real Bob was down at the beach playing football with Skill Cole and the House of Dread team, or rehearsing the band. Blackwell, who of course knew Bob very well, said of him to *Melody Maker*: '. . . super-sensitive, amazingly bright, takes in a lot of things right to the back of his head. He's a natural leader and he has some very heavy people around him, heavy in the sense of being intelligent, bright and talented. . . . And it says a lot for him that they acknowledge him as their leader, because they're all very strong people in their own right. . . . They've always been a very independent crowd of people, the Wailers.'

Many of the questions Bob was asked had to do with his lyrics, and he provided some interesting interpretations. To a reporter from *Oui* magazine who asked about 'Burnin' And Lootin' ', Bob said: 'That song about burnin' and lootin' *illusions* . . . the illusions of the capitalists and dem people with the big bank accounts.' And when *New Musical Express* asked if 'Them Belly Full' was a tract on starvation and wealth, Bob said no, not exactly. 'Your belly's full, but we're hungry for the *love* of our brethren. Food might be in your belly,' he said, 'but there's more to living than just filling it. Where's the love of your brother?' Often asked by white reporters if his music was anti-white, Bob again, patiently, said no. 'My music defends righteousness. If you're black and you're wrong, you're wrong. If you're white and

you're wrong, you're wrong. It's *universal*. Against white people? I couldn't say that. My music fight against the system . . . and I will keep on doing it until I am satisfied the people have the message that Rastafari is the Almighty, and all we black people have redemption, just like anyone else. Not for money will I do anything, man, but because I have something to do. There should be no war between black and white. But until white people listen to black with open ears, there must be, well, suspicion.'

How would he know when his work is over?

'Because I will feel myself satisfied, and I will feel like I am tired. And God will tell me. And the people will see and tell me. It is *redemption* now, yunno. No one can stop it.'

Eventually the foreign reporters went home and filed their stories, and Bob Marley mythology began in earnest. In April 1976 *Time* magazine gushed: 'Marley is Jamaica's superstar. He rivals the government as a political force. The mythical hero of his last album, *Natty Dread*, has already become a national symbol. Marley is a cynosure both in Jamaican society and in the Trench Town ghetto where he grew up. He seldom appears in either milieu, but when he does, it is with a retinue that includes a shaman, a cook, one 'herbsman' laden with marijuana, and several athletes.' A few people sensed that the social pressure on Bob Marley, and indeed on the whole nation of Jamaica, was reaching a breaking-point. 'At the moment the scene has a crazy-ish feel to it,' Chris Blackwell told *Melody Maker*, 'which is very dangerous.'

Meanwhile, during the sessions for *Rastaman Vibration*, the new album, and rehearsals for the summer tour of America and Europe, the Wailers changed musicians again. Al Anderson, whose guitar solos on 'No Woman No Cry' and 'Jah Live' had endeared him to many fans, left the Wailers to play with Peter Tosh, who was preparing his *Legalize It* album at the time. Al told Bob that Don Taylor's abrasive management had driven him out of the band, and advised Bob to get a new manager. Bob objected, saying that Don was black and, 'We give all black people a chance.' Another defection to Peter Tosh was Lee Jaffe, who had also become disillusioned by the end of the 1975 American tour and hadn't accompanied the group to England. Instead, he'd returned to Jamaica, where he was busted for herb in a road-block and jailed. After a few days, Bob, still in England, arranged to stand bail for Jaffe. Jaffe subsequently co-produced *Legalize It* with the rest of the Wailers, minus Bob, as backing musicians.

Al Anderson was replaced by a nineteen-year-old Kingston guitarist, Earl 'Chinna' Smith, a busy session musician who Al called 'the high

priest of reggae guitar'. Chinna had his own band, the Soul Syndicate, but played rhythm guitar for the Wailers during 1976. For a while, Tyrone Downie thought he was out of the Wailers too, because of the candid comments he had made about Bob in England to Carl Gayle, which had been published by *Black Music*, much to Bob's annoyance. For a month or so after the tour, Tyrone kept a low profile, half afraid to stop in at Hope Road to face the music. When he finally showed up, Bob and his entourage were in a room with the shutters closed; it was dark, with a dim candle burning, and the pungent smell of fish tea and the passing chalice tickled Tyrone's nose. 'They said the tour was on,' he said, 'they were happy to see me, was I coming with them? It was a big relief that I was still in the band.'

Even with Chinna Smith at rhythm guitar, the Wailers were still incomplete as an international touring band. Blackwell, Bob and Family Man all agreed that the Wailers had to have a rock-style 'lead' guitarist to appeal to an international audience. Chinna was roots, but the band needed some flash. It would take two guitarists to replace Al Anderson in the Wailers. And, as with Al, the Wailers turned to a black American. His name was Don Kinsey.

Blackwell found him, just as he had found Al. Don was playing in a trio called White Lightning; his brother Woody was on drums, Buster Cherry Jones was on bass, and the band had an album out on Island Records. Don was twenty-three and had been a professional blues guitarist since he was eleven. Born in Indiana, the son of a full-time blues musician, Don started playing with his father's band and when he had finished high school he went on the road with bluesman Albert King's band, forming the rock band White Lightning when his older brother got out of the army. Don was just what the Wailers were looking for, a blues guitarist who liked to rock. The question always was, could he play reggae?

In March 1976, Don Kinsey's father in Indiana got a phone call from Don Taylor in Miami. Would Kinsey be interested in coming to Miami, where the Wailers were mixing their new album? Don had met Bob the previous summer, after the Wailers' show at the Manhattan Center in New York, but had no idea that he was being considered to replace Al Anderson. Don flew to Miami, where he found Bob and Family Man mixing and overdubbing the 'Rastaman Vibration' track at Criteria studios. Don Kinsey sat down with his guitar in the studio and noodled a bit as he listened to the track. Bob recorded Don's practice riff and used it on the album. Don Kinsey had become a Wailer. 'It was my heavy blues roots,' he says. 'I was able to jell with them because reggae is a deep, deep feeling and has a lot in common with blues. I felt like I fit

right in.' He ended up overdubbing lead guitar throughout the album, except for 'Crazy Baldhead', which Al had cut before he withdrew. Kinsey then went back to Indiana. He had another call from Don Taylor a few weeks later, asking if Don would be interested in joining the band for the summer tour. Don flew to Kingston for a week, and settled into the seductive Hope Road routine of ganja at daybreak, porridge and fish tea, running on the beach, fresh fruit all the time. Bob checked him out spiritually. 'He had his Bible, and he said, "You ever read this?" He said, "Where you think you're from? Where's your homeland? What's your real nationality? What's your real language?" He was always testing me in those days.' Kinsey survived by concentrating at band rehearsals, gradually integrating the sound of his Gibson SG blues guitar into the Wailers' groove, even pushing the beat a little more into the spectrum of rock. More assertive than Al Anderson, Don Kinsey really changed the way the Wailers sounded while he was in the band.

Rastaman Vibration, the Wailers' fifth album for Island, was released in May 1976. Its rough jacket of simulated sacking material depicted Bob Marley in fatigues and bore the inscription: 'This album jacket is great for cleaning herb.' The back of the jacket bore the first scriptural quotation on a Wailers record; it was the 'Joseph is a fruitful bough' verse from Genesis 49. For the first time Bob Marley was publically identifying himself as Joseph, his name as a member of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. *Rastaman Vibration* was the first Wailers album to be widely considered disappointing by Wailers fans. After the dread rhetoric of *Natty Dread* and the fiery rock music of *Live*, the new album seemed unmilitant and a little contrived. The criticisms were for reggae's hardcore only: the album gained new fans who boosted it into the charts in England and America. It was Bob's biggest success ever.

Bob only took credit for three of the album's songs, the rest being divided between other Wailers and Bob's friends. While almost all the songs are undoubtedly Bob's he was still signed to Danny Sims as a song-writer, and he wanted to avoid paying Cayman Music the major portion of his composer's royalty. The album's opening tracks, 'Rastaman Vibration' and 'Roots Rock Reggae', are both credited to Vincent Ford, Bob's old friend Tartar. The ballad 'Johnny Was', a sad tale of violent death in Trench Town, was credited to R. Marley, Bob's wife Rita. A new version of 'Cry To Me', an ancient Wailers standard, was credited to Bob, while the stern, admonitory 'Want More', which spoke to the Jamaican people in folkish terms, was credited to Family Man. 'Crazy Baldhead' on side two, the rootsiest number on a generally avant-reggae album, was credited to Bob and Tartar, while 'Who The

Cap Fit' (recorded years before as 'Man to Man') was assigned to the Barrett brothers. Bob took sole credit for 'Night Shift', which had previously been called 'It's Alright', Bob's memories of the factories and warehouses of Delaware.

Rastaman Vibration's centrepiece was 'War', Haile Selassie's speech on African resistance movements set to an ultra-modern Carlton Barrett time signature; the hypnotic, chanting nature of Selassie's speech on the bondage Africans suffer is interpolated by Bob and the I Threes, calling for war. '*And until the ignoble and unhappy regime that now holds our brothers in Angola, in Mozambique and South Africa in sub-human bondage has been toppled and utterly destroyed/Everywhere is war.*' With 'War' Bob Marley and the Wailers became identified with a new international movement supporting African resistance – the movement that would culminate years later in the liberation of Zimbabwe. 'War' was credited to Skill Cole and Carly Barrett.

The album's last (and best) track was 'Rat Race', a bitter commentary on the Jamaican national elections: '*When the cat's away/The mice will play/Political violence fill ya city, yeah/Don't involve Rasta in your say-say/Rasta don't work for no CIA/Rat race, rat race, rat race.*' Released as a single by Tuff Gong, 'Rat Race' was a huge smash in Jamaica, outselling even Bunny's big hit of the day, 'Battering Down Sentence'. Island released 'Roots Rock Reggae' as the single for England and America.

The Wailers went on the road in June; three months of touring in America and Europe had been arranged. With two guitarists and Marcia back in the I Threes, the Wailers were a ten-piece, and in spite of Bob's perfectionist rehearsals, it took the band a few dates to get the feel of each other. Don Kinsey recalls the initial difficulty of playing 'with seven other musicians, each playing a different rhythm, and you have to sustain yours. You have to simplify your style, set back, mellow it out, play nice and sweet.' Kinsey taped most of the rehearsals, sound checks and early gigs on a small cassette recorder, so he could practise in his spare time. 'I spent a lot of nights in my hotel,' he says, 'studying that music.' Also part of the touring party was Alan Cole, working as a road manager and general man-at-arms, Tony 'Gillie' Gilbert, who was cooking, Neville Garrick, soundman Dennis Thompson, and Tony G, Don Taylor's road manager. (The siren used on 'Crazy Baldhead' was originally bought by Tony G on the previous tour to blast at attractive women espied by the Wailers from their bus.)

Once again the tour began in Miami. Don Kinsey said, 'When we finally hit the stage, it was the ultimate experience. It really opened my head up to see that many people aware and in tune to what he sang. It

was really encouraging. It made me want to play my best, every night.'

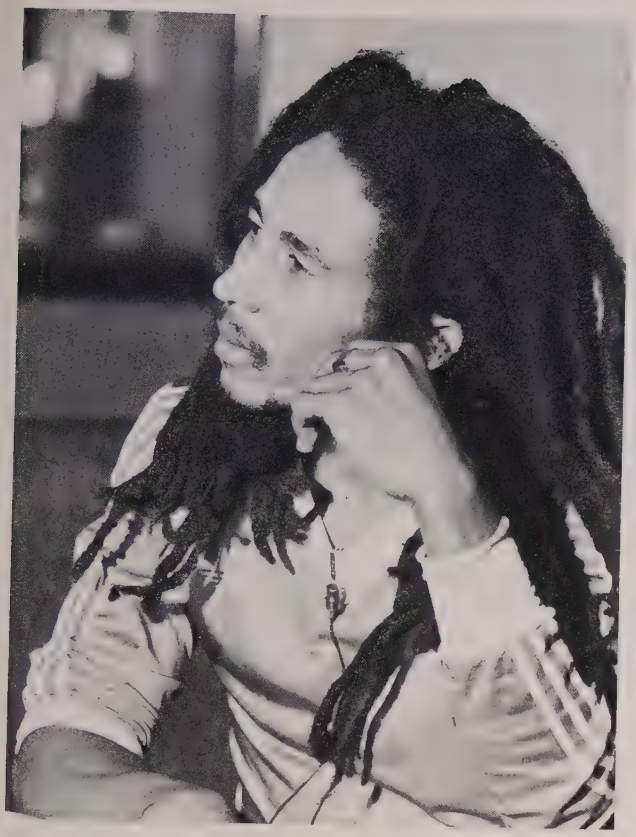
The first major show of the tour was at the Tower Theater in Philadelphia, and it was unlike any show that Bob Marley was ever to perform. After Tony G's corny soul-show intro – 'Coming rootically all the way from Trench Town, Jamaica, the proverbial, the prophetic Bob Marley!' – Bob launched into an apostolic Christo-Rasta worship service, with Tyrone's organ sounding like Ebenezer Baptist Church and the I Threes choiring like a Wednesday night prayer meeting. 'Rasta Man Chant' got a new lyric: '*The Conquering Lion shall break every chain/Give us the vict'ry again and again.*' After a subdued 'Burnin' And Lootin' ' Bob was positively mellow from the stage: 'Well yeah! How ya all doin'? Jah bless you all yunno . . . cause Jah Live!' Some Wailers fans were puzzled; this wasn't the firebrand Marley they had expected. They didn't know that Cedella Booker was in the audience, having driven up from Delaware to see her son perform in public for the first time. She sat through the show, transfixed and excited that the big crowd seemed to be rejoicing with Bob. 'He looked like a different person up there,' she says. 'You could see God Himself in him.' The Tower show was long, as the band tested concert veterans like 'I Shot The Sheriff' with new songs from *Rastaman Vibration*. The show climaxed with 'Rat Race', a long jam on 'Want More' where Bob began to talk in tongues, a trancey 'Rastaman Vibration' and a ritualistic 'Get Up Stand Up'. As on most of that tour's shows, Bob and his eight-year-old son Ziggy danced on the last song.

The tour went on to Boston, then to New York, where the Wailers sold out the Beacon Theater on Broadway. 'War in Rema,' Bob shouted. 'War in Concrete Jungle. War in Tivoli. Dis is war!' Bob sat for an interview with *High Times*, and posed for the drug magazine's cover beaming possessively over a kilogram of marijuana. Island's publicity officer said it was the only photo session he arranged where Bob was an enthusiastic participant. After smoking some of the magazine's Thai weed, Bob launched into a complex lesson on Rasta spiritual economy that the editors chose to print verbatim. As with all the interviews on the tour, Skill Cole sat quietly in the corner, occasionally interjecting when something interested him. In Chicago a week later, Bob complained about writers who misinterpreted him, and the interviewer suggested that some writers might be confused by someone who talked rebellion but drove a big car and lived in a big house. Bob was incensed at that. 'Ya see, my father is in Zion,' he said, trying to keep his composure. 'And my father create everyt'ing pon the face of the earth. I mean, what is a house for I to live in? When I was living in Ghost Town, no writers came down there, yunnerstand?

Bob with gold records awarded for 'Is This Love' and 'Jamming', 1977.

Peter Tosh joins the Wailers for a climactic 'Get Up, Stand Up' at the Starlight Amphitheater, California, 1978.

The Wailers: (*top row, from the left*) Tyrone Downie, Junior Marvin, Earl Lindo, Alvin Patterson; (*bottom row*) Carly Barrett, Bob Marley, Al Anderson, Family Man Barrett.



Bob at a press conference in Paris, 1978.

Bob consults his Bible while on tour, 1979.

Bob at Hope Road.

Cindy Breakspeare with her son Damian.

The soccer-addicted Bob enjoying his daily habit.

Bob receives a Maori greeting during the Wailers' tour of New Zealand, 1979.

Bob during the Wailers' last tour, 1980.

Cedella Booker and Bob read the Bible together at Dr Issels' clinic in Bavaria, March 1981.

The official funeral for Bob at the National Arena, Kingston, 21 May 1981.

Edward Seaga, the Jamaican prime minister, walks up the hill to Bob Marley's tomb.

Bob Marley's grave (*left*) next to the little house where he lived with Rita between 1967 and 1970.

When I was living in Ghost Town, leaning against all that zinc, with the burial-ground right in front of me, there was nobody there. So we move uptown and the writers come; me got to go somewhere where all the writers can come.' Bob and Skill dissolved into sardonic laughter at the thought.

A few weeks later, the Wailers hit Los Angeles, and the tour checked into the Cavalier Motel in Westwood, where Bob was besieged by fans and reporters. A few miles away on Sunset Strip, a giant billboard advertising *Rastaman Vibration* presided over the smoggy cruising boulevard. The album had reached number eleven on the American charts, the Wailers' highest commercial penetration ever, and gave every indication of going into the top ten. All the Wailers' southern California gigs – the Roxy Theater, Santa Monica, Long Beach, San Diego – were sold out. The show at the Roxy was a particularly brilliant and gem-like performance, in part because Bob Dylan was in the audience and Dylan was a favourite of Bob's. 'Him really say it clear,' Marley had said of Dylan earlier in the year. The crowd at the Roxy was wild for the Wailers and sang along with every tune, and the relatively intimate showcase allowed the band to sparkle. The first three songs were taken slowly, as the Wailers built steam. 'Rebel Music' followed, a little faster, and then Family Man's new bass-line for 'I Shot The Sheriff' got the building rocking. 'Want More' was played as a dub showcase for the Barrett brothers, and led into 'No Woman No Cry' and 'Lively Up Yourself'. 'Roots Rock Reggae' was done as a tribal recitation with the I Threes, followed by a spooky 'Rat Race' and 'Rastaman Vibration'. The finale was a long show-within-a-show beginning with 'Get Up Stand Up,' which blended into 'No More Trouble,' then the long Selassie tirade of 'War,' which dissolved into a vocal jam with the I Threes ending in a new climax of 'Get Up Stand Up'. Bob called out the vocalism '*Woi-yo*' and the I Threes and eventually the whole audience answered back '*Woi-yo-yo-yo*!' Many Wailers connoisseurs believe it was the best performance the band ever gave.

Back at the Cavalier Motel, everything was cool. During the day Bob and Skill played football and gave interviews. They occasionally ran around with the pretty girls who seemed to be knocking on Bob's door at all hours. Rita tended not to live with Bob when he went on the road, preferring to share a frugal room with Judy and Marcia. Cocaine was always being offered, but in those days Bob usually stayed away from coke and mandated that the rest of the Wailers stick to herb as well.

Some interesting clues to Bob Marley's sense of self were given in interviews. To Carl Gayle of *Black Music* Bob said, 'Me is a natural man

like any other man, and me feel like any other man. Me nuh really feel like a entertainer or a star or any o' dem t'ing deh. Me really know what me a-deal wid. Me know wha' me want, me know whey me come from, and me know whey me go.' To a reporter from *Chic* magazine, who asked if Bob thought much about himself and his pleasures, Bob replied: 'No man, I don't think o' me that much. Me know me do t'ings, me like to do plenty t'ings. The important t'ing is that the *truth* will spread out, and the change wha' some people figure can happen, a-gwan happen. Yeah man! I just so confident, is a *shame*.'

Asked by Carl Gayle about the violence in Jamaica, Bob replied with a candour he might not have used were he speaking in Jamaica: 'Political violence, I mean *planned political warfare*, trouble political people. Check for instance we now. Though we could sing a tune and ten thousand people buy it, then politician would like have you in him back pocket. So you cyaan mek dat happen yunno. Is a dangerous game.'

Many reporters asked Bob about the difference between his dance music and his religious philosophy. 'Well, you see it's the whole educational thing. If you talkin' to some people you 'ave fe talk to dem 'bout what *dem* a-talk about before you talk to dem about what *you* talk about.' To another reporter: 'These songs, people understand them or they cyaan understand them, but ya 'ave fe sing them just the same. Ya *really* 'ave fe sing them. What the people want is the *beauties*, man.'

When one reporter questioned Bob on the death of Haile Selassie the previous year, Skill Cole spoke up:

'Do you have personal knowledge of this?'

The reporter stammered that he had seen pictures in the papers, and Skill scoffed, 'Pictures? I don't see no pictures! It's propaganda, man!'

Bob said, 'Selassie-I, you can check him so. Cos if him eighty-three today, tomorrow you see him and he twenty-eight. And next mornin' him a baby, and today him a bird. Yeah man! Jah Live! Ya cyaan kill God!'

The Wailers moved to Europe after the southern California shows. In Dusseldorf they played to four thousand in an outdoor concert. Backstage in the dressing room, Bob was handling a precious spliff when the Dusseldorf police walked in and announced a search. For twenty minutes, police questioned Bob about drugs while Bob palmed the spliff. Then they asked Bob to accompany them to his hotel so that he could be present during a search of his room. As they were walking out to the car, Bob surreptitiously handed the spliff to Tony G, who was walking next to him. Tony disposed of the roach, but it was the closest call the band was to have with the law that tour. In Amsterdam, Tony G remembers, 'We left the stage with everyone in the auditorium singing

woi-yo-yo-yo-yo, and they was still singing as we got on to the bus, and they was still singing as we drove out of the stadium, and we could still hear them singing *woi-yo-yo-yo* when we were five blocks away. That really put a smile on Bob's face.'

In Paris, they again played to adoring capacity crowds, French kids and West Africans drunk on reggae music and the wiry little sorceror who windmilled his dreadlocks and seemed to command his own shining cult of swaying priestesses and hard reggae warriors. Don Kinsey's screaming, acidic guitar showpieces were given more space on the Continent, prior to the shows in England. Also in Paris Bob gave interviews, listening patiently as a translator reworked the French reporters' questions in terms Bob could deal with. One young French girl asked Bob how old he was and he answered, 'Today.' Another asked about his home and Bob said, 'My home is what I think about. My home is not a material award out there somewhere, yunno. My home is in my head. In the other type of language, realistically I mean, I never stay away from Jamaica yet. I am always there.'

A lot had changed for Bob Marley in the year since he and the Wailers had last been in London. He was no longer just reggae's first star, he was its spokesman. And even more than that, as *New Musical Express* explained: 'The white kids have lost their heroes; Jagger has become a wealthy socialite, Dylan a mellowed, home-loving man, even Lennon has little to say any more. So along comes this guy with amazing screw-top hair, and he's singing about "Burnin' And Lootin' " and "brainwash education" and loving your brothers and smoking dope. Their dream lives on. And for the black kids, a leader, far more than just a star to many of them. Rastafari lives in him; he carries the spirit of their religion and their God.'

The Wailers' initial shows in London, at the Hammersmith Palais, were marred by sound problems, but as the tour progressed through England they got into their stride, a Rasta revival meeting careening through the British landscape. At Cardiff, Wales, there was a near-riot when fans without tickets couldn't get in.

Back in London, the tour over, Bob and Skill Cole planned a trip to Ethiopia. Tony G ran about arranging injections and visas for the group in record time, but as Ethiopia was at war with Somalia at the time the plan was impossible to carry out. Those arrangements were the last Tony G performed for the Wailers. Don Taylor, jealous of Tony's intimacy with Bob, had tried several times during the tour to get Tony into trouble, which was not difficult as Bob was easily perturbed when travelling. 'Once we went to a town,' Tony G remembers, 'and Bob

likes to have a spacious room, okay? But we didn't always have much money then for him to have a suite. So Don Taylor said to get Bob a single room, and I followed orders. I found it peculiar, because I was always getting Bob a double or a suite if it had a kitchen. So I gave him his key and took up his stuff, and later on he came down and I hear him say, very hard, "Where Tony Garnett?" I could tell from his tone of voice that sumpin' not right. I say "Wha' happen?" and him seh, "It's *Trench Town* me come from yunno. One room!! Me nuh wan' see dem t'ing nuh more. How come you give me this likkle room? Whey *you* room? Lemme see ya room now." I show him my room, a big room, and him say, "Look pon ya room and look pon that likkle room you give me. I want something *decent* and t'ing". ' Later, Bob voiced suspicions about Don Taylor's dealings to Garnett, and asked him if he thought he could do Taylor's work. Garnett said no, that he just didn't have the contacts and qualifications that Taylor had.

The Jamaica that Bob returned to in September was in some ways different than the one he had left only four months before. Michael Manley had declared another State of Emergency on 19 June and was now ruling by decree in an effort to crack down on the political violence that was turning Kingston into a ghost town. A long tradition of election-year violence had got out of control in Jamaica, aggravated by a strange flood of thousands of pistols and shotguns into Jamaican society. The sources of all these guns were mysterious. Some said that the big ganja dealers in the rural parishes were now demanding guns in payment for their herb because the Manley government had made it illegal to have US currency. Huge shipments of small arms were said to be landing on darkened country lanes in light planes out of Miami and Louisiana. The guns were then easily converted into cash in Jamaican cities and towns. Others said that the guns were smuggled into Jamaica by the JLP (now under the leadership of the former record-producer, Edward Seaga) in order to prevent what some Jamaicans interpreted as a Communist takeover. Michael Manley's increasingly militant socialist programme, his material support for the revolution in Angola, and his friendship with Fidel Castro of Cuba frightened the old Jamaican plantocracy and the merchant classes. They looked at Michael Manley and saw red. As the IMF forced Jamaica to adopt strict import and currency restrictions, foodstuffs sometimes dwindled; there were shortages of rice, cooking oil, flour. People wondered what had happened to Michael Manley's vaunted management abilities. At the same time, a brain-drain of educated and skilled Jamaicans sapped the country of some of its best people. Manley and his supporters began to speak darkly of 'destabilization', the planned disruption of Jamaica's

economy by the CIA, which in 1973 had helped the Chilean army savage that nation's experiments with elected socialist change. In Kingston's virulent street graffiti, Edward Seaga got a new name – CIAga. The big songs of the day were all militant: 'We Should Be In Angola' by Pablo Moses, 'MPLA' by the Revolutionaires, 'Right Time' by the Mighty Diamonds, 'Ballistic Affair' by LeRoy Smart. The *Gleaner* blared out daily headlines on the night's murders and mayhem, and it seemed to Jamaicans as if Kingston was becoming a Belfast or a Beirut, another tribal city bent on its own annihilation.

It was in this sultry, dangerous port city that the events surrounding the Smile Jamaica concert were played out. Since playing with Stevie Wonder at the benefit concert in 1975 Bob had talked of making a similar gesture. He wanted the Wailers to do a free concert in Kingston's National Heroes Park as a way of thanking Jamaica for its support. Jamaica House, the prime minister's headquarters, was contacted and PNP minister Arnold Bertram acted as liaison for the government. Other artists – Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer (as he was now calling himself) and Burning Spear – were asked to play. A date was set: 5 December 1976.

The idea of the concert was to work for peace among the warring factions of Jamaica. The theme was Smile Jamaica, and the Wailers recorded two versions of a song under that title. The first was a fast scatting Afro-ska, cut at Lee Perry's new studio, the 'Black Ark', a green concrete bunker behind Perry's house in suburban Washington Gardens. The second version, slower and more sombre, was recorded at Harry J's: *Feeling up/Feeling down/This feeling wouldn't leave me alone/ Then I came 'pon one who said/Hey dread, smile natty dread/Smile, you're in Jamaica now*. It made a powerful statement, Bob Marley affirming his Jamaican nationality for all to see.

Not long after the concert had been scheduled, the government announced the date of the national election for two weeks after the concert, on 20 December. For Manley and the PNP, it was a brilliant stroke of political theatre. On the eve of the election that would decide the destiny of Jamaica for the next five years, at the height of the battle between socialism and capitalism in the Caribbean, Bob Marley and the Wailers, who had supported Michael Manley in 1972, would again appear to endorse Manley and his vision before an immense number of Jamaicans. At Hope Road, there was consternation. Bob was incensed that his charity concert had been co-opted by the government. And where the Rasta community had generally supported Manley four years earlier, most Rastas now were embittered that Manley hadn't legalized ganja or facilitated the repatriation of Jamaicans to Ethiopia. Yet the

concert had an attractive side for the Wailers; their topical singles, 'War', 'Rat Race' and 'Who The Cap Fit', had all been banned from the radio, but 'Smile Jamaica' was a staple of the airwaves, a light and positive plea to Jamaicans to 'settle down, roots people'. Preparations for the concert went ahead, despite some anonymous warnings and threats against Bob, which were assumed to come from JLP sources but weren't taken very seriously.

In October Cindy Breakspeare won the Miss World competition at the Albert Hall in London. The *Daily Mail* splashed the beauty queen's romance with the Jamaican reggae king all over its front page. The press dubbed the pair 'Beauty and the Beast', and the fuss reaffirmed the scandal that had previously shocked local Jamaican conservatives; now it had reached London and New York that the exquisite Miss World was carrying on with Marley, who was known to be married and the father of at least eight children by various common-law wives. In New York, Don Taylor tried to put the affair in perspective for *People* magazine in their article about Cindy: 'Bob loves his kids and takes care of his family, but he's a bit of a gypsy. In the Caribbean we deal with love in a much more relaxed way.' In the meantime Bob was in Delaware, where his stepfather Edward Booker lay dying. Mr Booker asked Bob to look after Cedella, Pearl and their two boys, and Bob gave his promise. When Edward Booker passed away, Bob told his mother to put her affairs in order, because he wanted to move her to a house he was thinking of buying in south Miami. Bob went back to Kingston a few weeks later, to prepare for the Smile Jamaica show. He found the island in the throes of the PNP's 'Under Heavy Manners' re-election campaign. The slogan implied that only national discipline could save Jamaica. With the nation up for grabs, there was the feeling that anything could happen.

Bob Marley and the Wailers hadn't been expecting trouble that Friday night, 3 December, even though unidentified voices on the telephone had warned that Bob should cancel the concert. Rita was also telling Bob that the concert was a mistake, and Marcia Griffiths flatly refused to perform because of the danger. There had been other omens as well, among the more clairvoyant of the Wailers. Two weeks before, Judy Mowatt had had a vision of a man stoning a rooster; the stones caught three chickens and their entrails protruded from their bodies. On the morning of 3 December, she awoke to find three of her chickens dead. And the previous night, Bob had stayed with Rita in Bull Bay and had a dream, as he later told interviewers Basil Wilson and Herman Hall, where 'I feel the whole thing going on . . . I was in a barrage of gunshot

and no gunshot catch me. The vision just say to me, "Don't run." And me just wake up. And in the morning when I reach Hope Road, I tell them, bwai, you want to see what happen last night, I dream seh I was into pure gunshot, so be careful.'

Rehearsing began at sunset in the studio behind the main house at Hope Road. The Wailers were jamming with the horn section from the band Zap Pow, who would accompany them later onstage. The I Threes were there, as were five of Bob's children and innumerable hangers-on. It was a warm evening; the sooty haze of the day had been blown out to sea, and stars were visible in the clear night air. The Wailers had been polishing 'Jah Live', which hadn't been played much in concert. At about 8.45, Bob decided to take a break. He told the musicians to work on the song's bridge and went into the little kitchen of the main house to get something to eat. Another reason for the break was the arrival of Up-Sweet, the Wailers' favourite collie-man, a ganja-dealer who was known for the best herb in Jamaica.

Just then Judy Mowatt, who was pregnant, began to feel ill, and asked Bob to find someone to take her home to Bull Bay. Bob was in the kitchen eating slices of grapefruit, and directed Neville Garrick to take Judy in Bob's BMW. Neville tried to get out of the chore, asking Diane Jobson to take Judy, mostly because he wanted to smoke some of Up-Sweet's famous product; but Bob's orders were law and Neville and an assistant engineer named Sticko drove the car through the gates with Judy in the back seat. As they left, just before 9 pm, Don Taylor drove into the compound and parked his car. From the back of the house he could hear the group rehearsing the bridge to 'Jah Live'. Taylor had come to see Blackwell on business but Blackwell was late, so Taylor walked into the kitchen and found Bob and Don Kinsey eating grapefruit. Taylor asked for some grapefruit and started walking across the little room to get a piece. At that moment, they heard the first shots, and the shattering of glass all round them.

Taylor's car had, after a minute, been followed into the grounds by two white Datsuns. One car blocked the front gate as another screeched up to the front of the house. Six gunmen jumped out: two stood guard in front while four others ran to each side of the yard and started firing at the house and anything that moved. The first sounds anyone heard were pops, like firecrackers, and then the air was rent by the crashing of the windows and splintering wood and plaster as the bullets flew around. Trying to get the children out of a side door, Rita was shot by one of the gunmen in the front yard. She felt a bullet enter her head and blacked out. At the same time, the other gunman guarding the front pushed through the nearest door with a revolver in his hand. Tyrone Downie's

girlfriend was standing right behind him, out of his line of sight, and described him as a sixteen-year-old kid, obviously terrified. He closed his eyes and pressed his head against the wall, blindly pointing his pistol into the corner where Family Man and other musicians were trying to squeeze into a bathroom. The kid pulled the trigger, and several bullets lodged in the organ and the ceiling. Then he ran out.

Back in the kitchen, Bob was puzzled at the sound of the firecrackers. Then he saw a masked man stick his head in the kitchen door and raise the barrel of a sub-machine-gun. Don Kinsey was standing next to him. 'One guy came through the little back door there,' he said, 'and man, this guy pulled this gun inside the door and just emptied that joker toward the corner where we were. And man, Bob and Don Taylor were right *there*. I said, God! What is going *on*! When I seen this gun come up in the door, it was like slow motion, like I could just see the bullets coming and going right beside me.'

Don Kinsey jumped behind some equipment and Bob jammed himself into a corner, trying to stay out of the way. Kinsey thought it was strange that the gunman didn't kill Bob. 'He looked right up at us in the corner,' Kinsey said, 'and he knew he [Bob] was in there. So I think he wasn't really aiming, but just firing.' The man got off eight shots. The first two were wild, ricocheting round the room. The next five ripped into Don Taylor's side and upper legs as he reached for the grapefruit Bob was still holding. The last slug caught Bob, grazing the breastbone under his heart and passing cleanly through the bicep of his left arm. Then the gunman ran out and back, toward the cars in front of the house.

After that, there were at least five minutes of dumb silence. Everyone who wasn't wounded had their heads down, unsure whether or not the murderers had left. Then panic and screaming started around the house as the reality of the ambush sank in. Don Taylor got up and started walking around, blood gushing from five bullet holes in his side and waist. After a few minutes he collapsed from shock and blood loss. By the time the first police-car arrived on the scene, ten minutes later, Bob and Rita were already on the way to the hospital, followed by Taylor and a badly wounded friend of the band named Lewis Simpson. Incredibly, despite the ferocity of the raid and the large amount of firing, no one had been killed. The rest of the Wailers melted away from Hope Road as soon as Bob and Rita had been loaded into a car. Twenty minutes after the shooting, 56 Hope Road was deserted except for the police.

Driving Judy home to Bull Bay, Neville Garrick heard about the shooting on a JBC radio bulletin at 9.30. After dropping Judy off,

Garrick burned rubber to get back, but the BMW blew a tyre on the coast road and they had to stop to fix it. Suddenly a police car pulled up. 'Bob Marley cyaar dat,' the police said, and drew their guns. When Neville told them who he was, the BMW got a police escort back to Hope Road. Neville ran into the kitchen and saw the grapefruit Bob had been eating, lying in a huge pool of clotting blood. Although the police wanted him to stay at Hope Road and take charge, Neville drove immediately to the hospital. His fears were allayed somewhat when he saw Bob sitting up on a bench in the emergency area, a bandage being wrapped around the sternum that had been chipped by the passing bullet. Bob's fatigue pants and *Rastaman Visitation* promotional shirt were soaked in blood. Rita was lying in a ward with her head bandaged. The bullet fragment had lodged between her scalp and her skull without seriously wounding her; she could talk and was giving a statement to the police. Out in the hall, Neville saw Don Taylor being wheeled past, looking blue and drained of blood. He was on his way to the surgery that would save his life. Soon after, Michael Manley came to the hospital, followed by PNP finance minister David Coore, the father of Bob's friend Cat Coore from the Third World band. Manley placed Bob under the protection of the Jamaican security service, and a few hours later, when his wounds had been cleaned and stitched and after Rita was asleep, Bob was spirited out of the hospital and whisked to a secret location to try to recover and regroup. The Smile Jamaica concert was still on, and Michael Manley wanted Bob to go through with it. But no one knew for sure if, Bob having survived, the assassins might try to finish the job.

Four hours after the shooting, Bob and his closest associates gathered at Strawberry Hill, an old colonial mansion in the mountains three thousand feet above Kingston. Blackwell had made the place available to Bob as a hideout and the grounds of the house were surrounded by heavily-armed police units; local mountain Rastas were said to be in the trees with sharpened machetes, standing watch over a scarred, frightened, and extremely bewildered Bob. He sedated himself with a series of spliffs and stared out into the dark, listening to the deafening night sounds of the jungle's insects and birds.

The following day, 4 December, Bob slept and rested. When he awoke, he was again faced with the problem of the concert. At that point, he had no intention of going through with it. His wife was in hospital, his children were safe, and he was alive but totally out of it. The Wailers were in hiding, scattered around Kingston, with little hope of gathering them in time.

The Wailers held a meeting that night from eight o'clock until two in

the morning, trying to reach a decision, trying to reason out who had shot at them. Most assumed it was 'poli-tricks', a case of rabid JLP jealousy over the Wailers' tacit endorsement of Manley and the PNP. Others weren't so sure, noting that one of Skill Cole's notorious scams, usually financed by Bob, might have backfired into an act of gangland vengeance. Bob thought the shooting might have had to do with the success of the Wailers, or his romance with Miss World which had infuriated some in Jamaica. In any case, he was so upset as to be almost incoherent and when the meeting broke up, he still hadn't made the decision to appear the following night.

Early on Sunday morning, the outlook from Strawberry Hill brightened. First came the news that Don Taylor would survive, and would be flown to Miami to have a bullet removed from his spinal cord. Then a film crew from New York, hired by Blackwell to chronicle the concert, gave Bob its set of powerful walkie-talkies, so the Wailers could communicate with each other from various locations about the city. But Bob was full of anxiety because the gunmen hadn't been caught. One of their cars had been found burnt and abandoned in Trench Town, but the identities of the assassins and whether they would attack again, remained a mystery.

Confusion reigned supreme as the day progressed. Bob sat at Strawberry Hill and waited, as Island Records press aide Jeff Walker talked via walkie-talkie to Blackwell and the film crew back at the Sheraton, and with Cat Coore of Third World, who had gone to the concert site with the other walkie-talkie. When neither Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer nor Burning Spear showed up to play, it was decided that Third World would go on stage to test the climate for Bob to come down from the mountains. Meanwhile police were searching for the other Wailers, trying to assemble the band back at Hope Road. Don Kinsey was found at a friend's house, where he had been hiding since the shooting stopped, and was given an escort to the Sheraton, where the film crew was preparing its gear. Kinsey talked to Bob over the walkie-talkie, and Bob asked if he would play. Kinsey said he would. Meanwhile, Tyrone and Carly Barrett had come to Hope Road, and only Family Man was missing from the nucleus of the band. Next Bob talked to Cat Coore at the site, where an estimated fifty thousand Jamaicans had gathered by four o'clock so as not to miss the historic concert that against all expectation still hadn't been cancelled. When Third World took the stage Bob could hear the crowd's enthusiastic response over the radio, as well as a passionate tribute accorded to Bob and the Wailers by master of ceremonies Elaine Wint. After their set, Third World spoke with Bob again, telling him the vibes were right for

him to come down and play. Next Bob spoke with Carly Barrett at Hope Road, wondering how the Wailers could play without Family Man. At this Cat Coore piped in that he would play his bass. 'Get over to the concert,' Bob then told his drummer. 'I t'ink we a-gwan come down.'

Five minutes later, Bob had a change of heart when Rita begged him not to do the show. Judy Mowatt remembers: 'Rita had come out of the hospital that same evening, and she was up at Strawberry Hill still wearing her bandages and her dressing-gown. Lots of people were asking Bob if he was gonna do the concert and he didn't give them any reply at all. But a few people were *insisting* that he do the concert. And Rita was there crying and saying that he shouldn't do the concert because of what had happened to him. A lot of people, myself too, was fearing that the concert might be worse than what had happened at Hope Road.' When Bob looked like he was wavering, an argument erupted between him and the powerful, radical PNP housing minister Anthony Spaulding, who had been given the task of persuading Bob Marley to play that evening. (Spaulding may have called in an old favour, having given Bob a house in Bull Bay when the PNP took over in 1972.) Eventually, his rhetoric and cajoling persuaded Bob; the group piled into a motorcade idling outside the house. Next to Marley in the back seat of a red Volvo was the Jamaican commissioner of police. As the line of cars began a mad dash down the winding mountain roads, the commissioner opened his attaché case and casually assembled and loaded a small machine-gun, just in case. When Jeff Walker contacted Heroes Park and informed the stage crew that Bob was on his way and that the Wailers would play, he could hear the jubilation on the other end of the walkie-talkie. Half-way down the mountain, the motorcade blundered into a rival JLP election rally that was just breaking up. But instead of being hostile when the crowd saw who was in the car, they began to chant, 'Bob-Mar-ley, Bob-Mar-ley!' At that point, Bob realized that his safety might be assured.

Down at National Heroes Park there was pandemonium. The crowd had swollen to eighty thousand, the entrances to the park were clogged and the tiny stage was illuminated only by a spotlight and the lights of the film crew. Michael Manley was up on stage, talking to the people as he waited for Marley. When Bob's car squeezed through, Bob bounded out and was rushed up to the stage where he was embraced by Manley, who then retreated to the top of a nearby van where he watched the concert in full view of any of the snipers who were generally presumed to be lurking in the crowd. 'The great, the great, the great, the great Bob Marley,' the MC shouted. 'C'mon people, the guy come out of his *bed* fe sing fe you!'

Rita Marley and Judy Mowatt had been in a car behind Bob's, and by the time the two women struggled through the crowd to the side of the stage, Bob was already into the first number, a churning version of 'War'. When he had first reached the stage, Bob had checked which musicians were there – Carly, Tyrone, Cat Coore from Third World, the Zap Pow horns and five drummers from the *akete* group Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus. It was good enough. Bob turned to the cheering throng and shook out his dreadlock mane with a wild yodel of exultation. Then he asked for quiet, and said: 'When I decided to do this concert two and a half months ago, *there was no politics*! I just wanted to play for the love of the people.' Then he muttered that the Wailers would do just one song, and lit into 'War'. Half-way through the song, Don Kinsey showed up and took over on guitar. Dressed in a simple brown shirt over his bandaged torso and wearing jeans and ankle boots, working without his heavy electric guitar, Bob performed a manic 'War' for the first time in Jamaica, driving the pick-up Wailers to a hard, military groove. Then, instead of leaving the stage, Bob went into 'Trench Town Rock', followed by 'Rastaman Vibration', a murderous rendition of 'Want More', and an amazing version of 'So Jah Say', perhaps the only time the Wailers ever performed that song in concert. Many in the delirious crowd were especially moved by the spectacle of Rita appearing in her nightgown and robe, an Ethiopian scarf covering the bandages wound round her head.

As the Smile Jamaica concert came to its climax, Bob finished his ninety-minute set with a dramatic gesture. He pulled up his loose shirt and rolled up his sleeve to expose his wounds to the people. Then he let his clothes drop and crouched into the stance of a Wild West gunfighter, pointing two fingers at the crowd like a pair of Colt .45s. Head thrown back, locks whirling in pride, Bob's gesture seemed to breathe defiance and victory. Within minutes, the nervous crowd had scattered. It was said that never had a crowd disassembled so fast in Jamaica.

But Bob was still terrified. He spent the night, heavily guarded, at Strawberry Hill, and at seven the following morning flew out of Jamaica on a private jet chartered by Chris Blackwell, accompanied only by Neville Garrick. They were bound for Blackwell's new headquarters on the island of Nassau in the Bahamas. It would be more than a year before Bob would set foot in Jamaica again.

An hour later, they landed at Nassau airport, and Bob had to pass through a very edgy customs examination. By then, the assassination attempt was headline news all over the world, and anxious officials asked the exhausted Bob if he was seeking political asylum in the

Bahamas. Bob said no, that he was on vacation. When customs finally let them through, a car took them to Blackwell's house at Compass Point where Bob retired to try and get some sleep. He had been almost continuously awake since Friday morning, four days earlier. But two hours later police and officials were at the door to escort Bob and Neville to another interview with higher immigration officials. They were eventually given the most conditional of temporary visas, so that the authorities could deport them quickly in case of trouble. Rita Marley and the children arrived a day later, followed by the rest of the Wailers in another week. Everyone's visa had to be renewed every week. Eventually Don Kinsey had had enough, and flew home to Indiana with regrets and no hard feelings.

Who shot Bob Marley? Rumours ripped through every level of Kingston. Some people thought that the attempted assassination might not have been political. One widely circulated rumour claimed the shooting was the result of a racetrack fix at Caymanas Park, engineered by Skill Cole, who then skipped out of the country with a large amount of currency. Variants of this rumour included ganja deals, cocaine burns, and a revenge hit by Jamaican gangster elements. Perhaps significantly, Skill Cole disappeared from Jamaica for almost four years. Later, several Wailers heard that the assassins hadn't themselves survived the weekend, having been murdered by the elements that hired them.

According to Michael Manley, speaking years later, his intelligence service 'drew a blank' when the shooting was investigated. Detectives naturally tried to trace the getaway car back to Tivoli Gardens, the slum constituency of opposition leader Edward Seaga, but to no end. It was, Manley said, 'an extremely skilled and professional job', though all the bullets were home-made. Some said that the professionalism included the fact that no one had died, as if the shooting was a warning rather than an assassination attempt. Others said the target might not have been Bob, but Don Taylor, who was known to gamble.

The shooting did attain one objective: Bob Marley was physically removed from the political landscape, no longer a threat to either side in the worsening battle for Jamaica. And a week later, on 15 December, voters gave Michael Manley and the PNP forty-seven seats out of sixty in the Jamaican parliament, a convincing mandate for socialism in Jamaica.

Later, when asked who had shot him, Bob would say he wasn't sure. 'A man came to me and want to clear up my mind, and say, "Bob, is politics." He said to me he was in one place and see where I was going to

get hurt, but he just could not do anything. That mean, the man tell me, is his side it come from. But that cool. Some people want to talk about is through Miss World, and through the group and dem likkle t'ings. Is *foolishness*, all dat. Seen?' Much later, interviewed by the *New York Times* at his mother's house in Delaware, Bob was more philosophical about the reason he was shot. 'Maybe jealousy,' he said. 'Jealousy's a disease inside plenty people brain. It stir 'em up and twist 'em round toward wickedness. That the trut'. And when you know the trut', ya cyaan get annoyed.'

The Wailers stayed in the Bahamas for the next month, until January 1977. Just before Christmas, Bob was reunited with Cindy Breakspeare on nearby Paradise Island. Cindy had been in London during the shooting, attending to her chores as Miss World, and the reunion was a joyous and tender occasion for Bob, especially when Cindy told him she wanted to have his child. The couple spent long days swimming in the azure sea; at night they went to shows by pop groups at the big hotels. They were good friends who had fallen happily in love with each other again, and work began on Bob's ninth child. When their son was born, Cindy named the boy Damian.

8 · BABYLON BY BUS

'Yeah, seventy-seven, yunno? Two sevens meet, and that mean a dangerous time, dangerous in a sense of being a dangerous *good time. . . . So it dangerous and it good, all same time.'* (Talking about 1977)

Bob Marley and the Wailers moved to London to begin recording a new album in January 1977. As a balm for his wounds, physical and mental, Bob threw himself into his work. The band settled into a large and luxurious flat at 42 Oakley Street, Chelsea, and sealed itself hermetically from the world, an I-tal Rasta enclave protected by receptionists in the lobby and the apartment block's security system. The flat was carpeted in plush brown, the furniture was Habitat; Family Man had a mini-mixer between the speakers of his portable sound system so he could pump up the bass how he liked it, the television was always on – a Babylonian hearth – and Gillie was in the kitchen lovingly cooking and serving huge meals of ackee and salt cod, vegetables, dumplings, and Irish moss. As soon as a batch was ready Gillie would call out 'Where's the Skip?' so that Bob, a famous moss fan, would get the first taste. Once, at the London flat, a female journalist asked Bob what Irish moss would do for her health. As sincerely as possible, Bob told her that it would 'wet her poom-poom'.

A river of new songs and updated Wailers standards was running through Bob's mind, and he was anxious to record as soon as possible. But first a new guitar player was needed to replace Don Kinsey, and Bob had begun to think about trying to lure Al Anderson back from Peter Tosh's band when Blackwell mentioned Junior Marvin. Junior was a young black blues guitarist who had been born in Jamaica and then raised with relatives both in England and America. His real name was Julian; as a musician he had been known first as Junior Kerr, then as Junior Hanson. He had toured and apprenticed with the Texas

bluesman T. Bone Walker, and had also worked with Billy Preston, Ike and Tina Turner, and Bob's friend Stevie Wonder. Junior was an experienced blues-rock player who had released two albums with his own band, Hanson, in America. Bob liked him immediately because he thought he could hear a streak of Jimi Hendrix in Junior's style. One day Junior was recording a track for Steve Winwood at the Island studios when Blackwell asked him out of the blue if he'd like to join the Wailers. When assured that the Island boss wasn't joking, Junior said yes. He then spent a week with Bob and Tyrone Downie, jamming and learning the new songs Bob was working on. After a few days Family Man plugged his bass into a mini-amp and joined in. Junior was a Wailer. Someone popped a cassette into a recorder and the proto-sessions for *Exodus* had begun. 'Waiting in Vain' was then a slow, acoustic ballad, Bob and Tyrone duetting on the vocal harmonies the I Threes would later re-create. 'So Much Things To Say' only half-existed, as Bob was still working out the verses. 'Exodus' was emerging as a hard trance-rocker, goosed by Junior's beat-rushing style, while 'Jamming' was still an acoustic chant, Bob searching for the song's eventual bounce. He was preparing enough songs for at least two more albums, and during the rehearsals and jam sessions of that spring the Wailers assembled over twenty songs for recording. They were also closely monitoring the music coming out of Jamaica, taking note of the young groups that were emerging to fill the gap left by their exile, harmony trios like the Meditations, Israel Vibration, the I-tals and Culture. The big song of the day was Culture's 'Two Sevens Clash', an apocalyptic prophecy that 1977 would be a time of extreme judgment for Jamaica and the world at large. Jamaicans, especially the millenarian Rastas, felt something special in the air. 'These are the last days' was a common catch-phrase.

In London there was a different kind of feeling. Young rock fans were turning into punks, tearing their clothes, mortifying themselves with safety-pins and razors, dying their spiky hair in wild colours, and adopting a fetish regalia of black leather and bondage uniforms. They loved reggae, just as the skinheads had gone to black clubs to dance the rock-steady a decade earlier. And just as Jamaican society reviled the Rasta for his hairy cords and his no-future philosophy, the English dreaded the punk for his relentlessly blasting music, his psychotic and mutilated appearance, and for the outrages of the baddest of the punk bands, the Sex Pistols, who in the year of Queen Elizabeth's royal jubilee said 'fuck' on television and sang, '*God save the queen/and her fascist regime/She made you a moron/And England's screaming!*' Bob loved those lines.

In the middle of the sessions, Lee Perry showed up and moved into a flat at Island's Basing Street studios. The Wailers were heavily into the music for the album they had decided to call *Exodus*, but work stopped so Bob and Lee could catch up and talk about working together again. Perry had been producing brilliant, innovative reggae in Kingston, working with the Heptones and Junior Murvin, a veteran singer who had cut a song Perry had written, 'Police And Thieves'. The song had been a huge hit in Jamaica, where it described daily life in Kingston: '*Police and thieves in the street/Fighting the nation with their guns and ammunition.*' But now, at Island Studios, Bob and Lee Perry heard a new version of 'Police And Thieves' by a new punk band who called themselves the Clash, after Culture's song 'Two Sevens Clash'. The Clash's version of Perry's song was horrible, but for Lee Perry it held a certain fascination. It seemed to pave the way for punk's close alliance with reggae, the outcast youth of two races banding together for solace and support. The *Exodus* sessions had stopped for the day by the time Bob Marley agreed to go into the studio with Perry and record a song the two reggae masters had written about the alliance, 'Punky Reggae Party'. The only musicians around were members of Aswad, one of the young Rasta reggae bands that had grown in England in the wake of Jamaican stars like Bob. Aswad was quickly recruited to lay down a backing track as Bob put his soul into verses that described the common ground between rebellious black and white youth: '*Rejected by society/ Treated with impunity/Affected by my dignity/A search for reality – New Wave!*' Later some of the Wailers dubbed new parts behind a long, flamboyant scat vocal by Bob, and when Lee Perry rerecorded the song in Jamaica he added backing vocals by the Meditations, who croaked 'oink oink' behind Bob, reflecting Perry's distaste for the punk style of spit and grossness.

'Listen, punk love reggae,' Bob said later, 'and some a dem seh things that Babylon no like. I thought dem was badness first, but now me give dem nine hundred per cent right. Dem resist the society and seh, "Me a punk cos I don't want you to shove me where I don't like it." . . . Because him nuh feel like we inferior – white man feel inferior to the black man, that's why him try kill the black man. And the punk seh, "No! We wanna join wit the Rastaman and get something outta life." '

Bob Marley and the Wailers cut twenty new songs at Island Studios during the winter of 1977. The ten most innovative and expressive of these appeared on the *Exodus* album, released the same spring. The remaining ten came out in 1978, on the *Kaya* album. Bob's new collection of songs were a mixture of spiritual militance and self-

recrimination (his family – his children – had narrowly escaped murder) tempered by the most deeply felt and passionate love songs he would ever write, a reflection of his affair with Cindy Breakspeare. And the music itself was also changing. 'Exodus' incorporated the new four-to-the-bar 'militant' style of drumming, also called 'rockers', that had taken Jamaican reggae by storm. And the addition of Junior Marvin on guitar seemed to notch the Wailers' basic locomotion into a higher gear. That, plus the addition of a three-piece horn section (Vin Gordon, Glen DaCosta and David Madden) gave the Wailers an even more martial and explosive sound.

Exodus was unlike any other Wailers album. 'Natural Mystic' had a mysterious feeling, conducive to trance and an impending spell. The next three songs were programmatic, all dealing with the attempted assassination. 'So Much Things To Say' invoked Marcus Garvey and Paul Bogle (the executed leader of a failed Jamaican peasant revolt in 1865), before stating a Rasta mission: '*I and I nuh come to fight flesh and blood/But spiritual wickedness in high and low places.*' The song decried the rumours that had plagued Bob since the Smile Jamaica concert. 'Guiltiness' was an extraordinary incantation predicted by 'Natural Mystic', a long-distance curse at Marley's enemies: '*Woe to the downpresser/They'll eat the bread of sorrow/Woe to the downpresser/They'll eat the bread of sad tomorrow.*' 'Heathen' continued this assault and boosted family spirits as well: '*Rise up you fallen fighters/Rise and take your stance again/He who fights and run away/Lives to fight another day.*' A restive, disturbed mood was conjured by stinging solos from Junior and Tyrone, reggae-rock fireworks. 'Exodus' both described the Wailers' own hegira and called for a mental, if not physical, migration of New World blacks to Africa, forsaking the industrial materialism of the West by arming themselves with the faith of Rastafari and black prophecy: *Open your eyes and look within/Are you satisfied with the life you're livin'?/We know where we're going/We know where we're from/We're leaving Babylon/We're going to our father's land/ . . . Exodus! Movement of Jah people.*

The album's second side was much more reflective, a suite of dance and love songs. 'Jamming' was inconsequential, the Wailers going slightly disco. 'Waiting In Vain', a glorious love song, revealed a fragment of the affair between Bob and Cindy and a touching comment on jealousy: '*Tears in my eyes burn/While I'm waiting, while I'm waiting for my turn.*' 'Turn Your Lights Down Low' is the tenderest ballad of Bob's career, while 'Three Little Birds' is almost children's music, evocative of the carousel or a church fair. The album ends with a medley of the old 'One Love' with a revamped Curtis Mayfield chestnut,

'People Get Ready'. The use of the classic Rasta plea for unity and togetherness in 'One Love' seemed to lift the curse laid on the early part of the record, promising a reconciliation that would become a reality for Bob within the year.

Bob was restless during the recording sessions. The tracks took long, tedious hours to mix; when one was finished Chris Blackwell would send for 'the skip', who could usually be found in a heated game of table football with other Wailers or members of Aswad. There was one special moment when Blackwell called Bob in to listen to the final mix of 'Exodus'. Bob leaned against the wall as the martial music unfolded around him. Then Bob erupted into dance, a frenzied hop that galvanized the studio and sent everyone around him into motion. Bob liked the mix; it was an electric moment, the birth of 'Exodus'.

Bob's private life at the time was hectic. He was living alternately at the Wailers' headquarters in Chelsea and in a secluded house in Collingham Gardens, Earls Court, where he could be more private. He was introduced to the Ethiopian royal family, who were living in exile in London. The family was headed by Haile Selassie's grandson, Crown Prince Asfa Wossan, the pretender to Selassie's abolished throne. It turned out that Asfa Wossan was a Wailers fan, and he gave the awed Bob a ring that he said had once belonged to Selassie, a gold band with a golden Lion of Judah rampant on a setting of black onyx. The ring immediately became Bob's most treasured possession, perhaps his only one, and he wore it every day for the rest of his life.

Early in April, with the recording finished, the Wailers began to rehearse for the 1977 tour to support *Exodus* in Europe and the States. One night Bob and Family Man were driving down Ladbroke Grove, a partially West Indian neighbourhood in north-west London, when their car was stopped by police. When the constables searched them, they found a big spliff in Bob's pocket and another in Fams' sock. When the cops asked for Bob's residence he gave them the Earls Court address to avoid a bust of the rest of the band back in Chelsea. They went back to Bob's house, found a pound of ganja, and arrested both Bob and Family Man for possession.

The two Wailers were tried at Marylebone Magistrates Court on 6 April, found guilty, and fined £50. The judge told Bob and Family Man: 'Whatever the approach or attitude in your own country you must really appreciate that here it is still an offence. While you are here it would be very unwise to use or have possession of cannabis.' The two Wailers nodded solemnly in agreement, relieved to be let off with a slap on the wrist. Outside, on the courthouse steps, Bob told reporters that he smoked pot because he didn't drink. The man from the *Daily Mail*

asked Bob if he was planning to marry Miss World, and Bob laughed. 'She's one of my girlfriends,' was his reply.

The Wailers' European tour began in Paris in May, a month after *Exodus* was released and had jumped on the charts all over Europe. The tour went well, but right at the beginning there was a bad accident. Bob was injured during a pick-up football game between the Wailers' travelling squad and a team of French journalists. 'In Paris I was playing soccer and a man gave me a raas-claat tackle in the rain,' Bob recalled later. 'The foot started paining me, and I wonder now why it kept burning for so long. Bwai, I score a goal and just hop off the field. When I took off my shoe, the toenail was completely out.' The same toe had been hurt years before in a hard-fought game with Skill Cole in Trench Town. After the game, a French doctor examined the foot, cut off a jagged piece of nail, bandaged the wound and told Bob to stay off his feet. But he had a tour to do. *Exodus* was hot and Blackwell thought that with the Wailers providing maximum tour support, the album could be Bob's first international number one. The pressure was on. Bob wore heavy socks and sandals over his bandaged right foot. He even juggled a football during the lulls between soundchecks and the shows, hoping the toe would heal in time for the British dates of the tour. In the meantime he travelled around Europe in considerable pain.

The first show was at a converted slaughterhouse called the Pavillion in Paris. That afternoon the Wailers played a two-hour soundcheck without vocals, leaning heavily on older material for the European part of the tour to make up for the previous year's shows when they had played mostly from *Rastaman Vibration*, disappointing fans who came to hear familiar songs. As the band was dressing for the show, Bob was mockingly reproachful when he spied Tyrone's multi-zippered New Wave jumpsuit. 'I nuh want no punks in dis band,' he said with a laugh. Twelve thousand Parisians showed up for the show (opened by veteran Jamaican trombonist Rico Rodriguez). It was an inspired performance with Bob acting out his lyrics, crying in exaggerated rage and anguish, strutting across the stage in exaltation, his head in his hands, locks trembling like cobras. On his right, the I Threes experimented with Judy's new choreography, running through complex mime movements like the pistol-shooting pantomime on 'I Shot The Sheriff'. At one point the audience gasped when a madman bolted through the security line and started to dance round Bob on stage. Memories of the shooting were fresh in everyone's mind, but the man only wanted to express himself, and eventually Bob put his arm around him and they sang a verse of 'Lively Up Yourself' together before Don Taylor dragged the

intruder offstage. The most sensational new presence in the band was Junior Marvin; wearing tight pants, twitching his butt and throwing down histrionic rock riffs on his knees, Junior took some of the visual focus off Bob, leaving 'the skip' free to roam around the stage evolving his own exotic, pantomimic dances. Afterwards, Island Records gave a post-concert party for the Wailers at a chic *boîte* called the Club Elysées Montignan. As Bob came in, Bianca Jagger ran up and kissed him on the cheek. Bob thanked her, turned around and said, 'Who dat?' Still in the denims he wore onstage, he danced with a stunning African model for two hours before the two of them disappeared into the Parisian spring night.

The next day Bob sat for interviews, receiving the press in his kitchen suite at the Paris Hilton, dressed in a blue warm-up suit with a heavy silver Coptic cross dangling from his neck. The gold Lion of Judah ring beamed talismanically from his left hand. To journalist Karl Dallas he gave his improvised definition of the word reggae: 'Reggae kind of come from a Spanish, Latin word, and it mean "King Music". Yeah, that what reggae means.' Most of the writers wanted to know Bob's reactions to the shooting. Asked by Robin Denselow if he had been back to Jamaica since the incident, Bob said, 'No man, not yet. Fear, I wouldn't say fear yunno, but I really wouldn't want to get people with me shot up again, yunno, get them involved. . . . It nuh difficult for me a-go back, but I need some time out of Jamaica, in the quiet, because me cyaan t'ink vengeance. I *had* feelings of vengeance, yes, but me just outgrow it yunno.'

Did he know who shot him?

Bob laughed in his rolling, infectious bray. 'Yeah . . . but dat top secret. Yunno? Really top secret.'

Asked if *Exodus* sounded different because it was recorded in England, Bob said no. 'We're all on it, seven of us, right? And it's roots music, so if one man get too giddy, the other all seh, "Hey, him gettin' giddy!" I mean, him get too psychedelic [referring to Junior Marvin] and the islands don't like that, not a giddy man. Dem love a *root* man, so everybody have to stay root. . . . Like Aston Barrett and Carlton Barrett, yunno? Ya cyaan return to the roots, you must *be* the roots. Guy t'ink he can return to the roots when he was a leaf, he drop off and that how he return to the roots. We must *be* the roots.'

From Paris, the Wailers embarked for the next gig at Brussels by bus. Offstage Bob was shy, withdrawn, and spent his coach time quietly, but he perked up when Seeco's birthday was announced, a bottle of champagne was uncorked, and everyone sang happy birthday to the Wailers' rhythm elder. Wine was the only alcohol Bob Marley would

drink, and he loved good champagne.

When the bus hit the Belgian border Bob yelled out to everyone to flush their herb, but the customs, perhaps appalled by a coach-load of scowling dreads, let the Wailers through without a search. Bob played soccer between shows at the Hague, despite his painful foot. The tour passed through Holland, Germany and Scandinavia, giving spectacular shows of Wailers' greatest hits, depending only on Gillie's cookpot and electric blender for sustenance. In business affairs Bob depended on no one and trusted no one. The books of the tour management, an English company called Alex Leslie Entertainments, were under the constant scrutiny of Bob's lawyer, Diane Jobson. It was painful for Bob to think of all the money that had been stolen from him over his long career, and he was determined never to let it happen again. Even Don Taylor, now recovered from his wounds and dealing on Bob's behalf, was suspect.

On 1 June the Wailers began a week of concerts in London, at the Rainbow Theatre. One of the shows was filmed by Island Records and shown in European theatres later in the year. Bob was greeted as a Messianic figure, dressed in blue denim against a lurid stage backdrop of Trench Town shanties and bonfires. The audiences in their urban guerrilla outfits of boots and berets seemed in sharp contrast to the sensual majesty of the I Threes, swaying in African tie-dye dresses and green capes. Bob was dancing now as much with his arms as with his legs, stabbing the thick air during 'Road-Block', holding the bridge of his nose in deep thought as 'Crazy Baldheads' cleverly faded into 'Running Away', stretching out in an eerie cruciform during the metallic clank of 'War', while behind him Seeco banged a huge Niyabinghi bass drum and the Wailers pounded like a mechanized artillery column moving along bad road. 'No Woman No Cry' provided a breather, but then Bob was up and dancing madly with his guitar on a fast version of 'Heathen'. The show's finale was a transcendent 'Exodus', the Wailers building chorus upon chorus in ever-spiralling echoes and reverberation until the boundary between musicians and audience vanished and all were one in the spirit. Back in the dressing-room, an exhausted and limping Bob found his boots filled with blood; the ugly wound on his toe had opened again.

When the British leg of the *Exodus* tour was completed Bob flew to Delaware to rest at his mother's house and prepare for the American shows, which were to begin at New York's Palladium in July. But the crushed big toe on his right foot had never healed, and the infection had become worse in Europe and was beginning to fester. He tried to relax – he took his youngest step-brother Richard to a school picnic in a park

where he was surrounded by a large group of teenagers amazed by Bob's 25-inch dreadlocks – but his foot was so painful that he could hardly walk. The future of the lucrative American tour seemed in doubt. At Island Records there was consternation; no one could imagine a Wailers show without a leonine Marley prancing around, but *Exodus* had gone to number one in England and Germany after the Wailers had toured, and it seemed as if the album could do similar business in America if the Wailers provided proper support.

Bob then flew back to England to consult with a foot specialist. The doctor examined Bob and took some smears from the toe to study further. The next day, Bob was told that cancer cells had been detected under the microscope. 'Does that mean I have cancer?' an uncomprehending Bob asked. The doctor replied that it did. Bob asked what he could do, and the doctor suggested that Bob's toe and part of his foot be amputated immediately to prevent the further spread of the cancerous cells. Asked if there was an alternative, the doctor said if a small part of the toe was amputated and the area cleaned of infection, the cancer might be localized and possibly cured with normal therapy. The doctor added that the alternative was very risky, and recommended amputation as soon as possible.

Bob was in a terrible quandary. If his toe were amputated, his foot would heal in a month and the American tour could take place with a subdued, but definitely present, Bob Marley. If the other course were taken, Bob would have to be off his feet for six months, the already booked tour would have to be cancelled, and *Exodus* would suffer in sales. Naturally, Island Records urged Bob to have the toe off as soon as possible. But the devout Rastafarian, who saw his body as a temple, wasn't about to surrender his right toe and his life as a football fanatic. The situation bred serious tension between Bob and his business people, which Bob later described to interviewers Basil Wilson and Herman Hall: 'Here is what happen now. They don't want to run this thing like how I want to run it. Them want to run me on a star trip, but I am not on a star trip. I want that any time I tour and I look at myself and realize that my structure run down, I must rest. But they are not concerned with my structure. Dem run and plan a North American tour . . . I watch Mohammed Ali and Alan Cole and I see how these athletes take care of their structure. But the people who set up the tour do not work. Them just collect money and when night come you find them in bed with two girls while you bus' your raas-claat and work hard all the time. When my toe was injured, they didn't even know. . . . My toe-nail had just come out and the bwai-dem still set up a North American tour. . . . Hear what they had planned to do: they had

planned to cut off my toe, just so I could make the tour. . . . *Exodus* was a-bubble, and if I mek the tour *Exodus* would sell over a million. His Majesty [Asfa Wossan] said to me in London, "Is what sin you do to agree to cut off your toe?" So I just seh to dem, "Fuck off and go away." So I just decide, and take a rest.'

Against the advice of his London doctors, Bob returned to the United States for a second opinion. Accompanied by his personal physician, Dr Carl Frazier (known to the entourage as PeeWee), Bob went to Miami to consult Dr William Bacon, the surgeon who had saved Don Taylor's life after the shooting. That night he called his mother in Delaware and sounded very depressed; he told his mother that Dr Bacon had said that part of his toe would have to be cut off along with more flesh, higher up on the foot, if the cancer had spread.

Cedella remembers the call. 'He said to me, "Why Jah let me have cancer mama? I never do anybody anything that is bad, I never dunno able to why. Why would Jah let me have cancer?" So I never couldn't find no answer for him.' Cedella did seek out a famous black herbalist in the ghetto of West Philadelphia for a remedy for Bob, but the man said that because of who Bob was, he was afraid to take the case.

On 20 July Don Taylor's Miami office announced to the local promoters that the American tour was being postponed until the autumn due to an injury Bob had received in a soccer match. All tickets were refunded and the public relations stance was that Bob would resume touring in the autumn. Right after that, Dr Bacon operated on Bob at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Miami, cutting off the rest of his toe-nail and a patch of skin adjacent to it, scraping out as many of the deadly cells as possible.

Bob recovered quickly from the surgery. He bought a large suburban luxury home in Vista Lane, a well-to-do part of south Miami, big enough for Cedella and the extended family appropriate for a Jamaican chieftain. With a large screened patio and pool, it was a nice place to recover. The skin cancer diagnosed in Bob's foot was the most fatal of cancers but if discovered and treated early enough, was curable in many patients. Bob was given medication and told to change his diet to get more protein. Lee Jaffe walked into the kitchen in the Miami house soon after the operation to discover the formerly strict I-talist devouring a plate of spaghetti and meat-balls. Bob told Lee the doctor had ordered him to eat meat for the protein.

With careful treatment and regular check-ups, the doctors gave Bob a clean bill of health two months after surgery. And two months after that, Bob was playing football again. There were some bad moments –

Cedella remembers Bob stubbing the toe while he was clowning with his half-brothers and weeping with the pain – but everyone was optimistic, and praying that Joseph would be made strong by the hand of the Almighty.

Despite the cancelled tour, *Exodus* was a big hit in the States, which was a solace to Bob. He was pleased that the album was getting a lot of airplay on black stations for the first time, that black Americans were beginning to get the message he was putting out. The Wailers had always been puzzled by reggae's lack of acceptance in black America. Tyrone Downie voiced most succinctly what Bob and the band might have been feeling at the time: 'The blacks in America are into glitter; they're into platform shoes, fur coats and Cadillacs. They're tame, man, and they're not about to let their pretty Afros down. All that talk of revolution – it *vex* 'em man, it vex 'em bad.'

Bob's own attitude was both deliberately vague and visionary, as he told a reporter for the *New York Times*: 'In Africa, dey prepare for Zion. It is for dem me sing my song. Me only want to sing and spread the word. It slow to start yunno, but now it creep up and the time is right. The time is right to rise up against Babylon. It have to be, in America, all over the world. It is prophecy, and dat no man can change.'

As Bob's toe continued to heal, he remained among his family and entourage at the big house in Miami, supervising the left-over tracks from the London sessions which were being remixed and overdubbed at Criteria Studio, to be used on the next Wailers album. At the same time, early in 1978, Bob and Don Taylor were finalizing plans with their booking agent for a Wailers world tour that would begin in May of that year in the States, cover Europe in the summer, and wind up in Asia by the end of the year. Even after the previous year's cancellation, the Wailers had no trouble booking dates anywhere they wanted to go. Bob's absence seemed to make his fans' hearts grow fonder, especially after rumours of his cancer reached them after his operation. West Indians occupy many paramedical, service and custodial jobs in American hospitals, and within hours of his arrival at the hospital, the word had reached the street. In the press, Bob was accorded a reverence and moral authority that grew as he recuperated; he was described variously as 'reggae's shining prince', 'revolutionary artist', 'first Third World superstar', 'most important cultural figure of the seventies', 'a righteous campaigner for truth and justice', and – perhaps best – 'the psalmist of Jamaican reggae'.

Of course, not everybody loved Bob Marley. In Jamaica, where almost every Wailers lyric became a watchword, Wailers records were rarely among the Jamaican best-sellers after the shooting. It was as if

Jamaicans preferred their own roots music to the Wailers' new international sound. Some people, who gave credence to the rumours that the assassination attempt had been a revenge hit for Bob's part in a racetrack burn, accused Marley of selling out his ideals for money and the thrill of gangland enterprise. Others said the racetrack story was planted by the JLP to cover its own role in the shooting. And not all journalists were awestruck and grovelling. One long interview with *Melody Maker* went badly, with the writer unable to make anything but Rasta gibberish from the torrent of Bob's slurred patois on his tapes. When Bob saw the article he was almost trembling with anger as he read the quotes someone had underlined in red: 'Some of what Bob said was little short of crazy' . . . 'the absurdity of some of his thinking' . . . 'his verbosity is one-dimensional, emerging out of his bottomless faith in Rastafari' . . . 'his monomania is quite frightening' . . . 'incomprehensible rant'.

Nonetheless Bob never stopped working on his music and wrote new songs. Island had released 'Exodus' and 'Waiting In Vain' as singles during the previous year, and was now releasing 'Punky Reggae Party' in England. In Jamaica, the song was released on Bob's label, Tuff Gong, along with another Marley/Lee Perry collaboration, 'Rastaman Live Up', a wordy sermon with backing vocals by the Meditations. Another song of Bob's called 'A Jah Jah,' an extremely rootsy and hard-rocking reggae hymn, had been recorded by Rita Marley on Tuff Gong. Those two singles – 'Rastaman Live Up' and 'A Jah Jah' – were, together with the forthcoming Tuff Gong single 'Blackman Redemption', Marley's answer to the critics who said the Wailers had gone soft.

Two hundred miles from Miami, Kingston had gone into a wretched decline of violence and anarchy. And into a void of moral leadership stepped the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Their long-range plans would eventually provide the vehicle for Bob's safe return the following spring.

The island had never recovered from the influx of guns and the subsequent tribal warfare surrounding the 1976 elections. People were being murdered in petty robberies almost as an afterthought, and rape had become a national nightmare. So many children were raped in Jamaica that the island's doctors were emigrating in disgust, unable to treat any more half-dead raped children. Gunmen were breaking down doors with the butts of M-16s and raping women in front of their families. All over Jamaica, wives were urging their husbands to find work abroad and get their families out of Jamaica. Trying to stop the

crime, Michael Manley ordered the Jamaican army into the streets. Late in 1977, an army ambush slaughtered five leaders of the JLP-oriented South Side Gang, and began a policy of repression of gunmen and criminals, who were arrested on sight and jailed.

Two friends of Bob's found themselves sharing the same cell in January 1978. Their names were Bucky Marshall and Claudie ('Jack') Massop. Massop was one of the JLP's most powerful warlords, thought of as a vicious gangster and a master criminal by the PNP forces. Marshall was a very minor PNP gunman who like Massop had grown up with Marley in the zinc-sided back alleys of Trench Town. On the street the two men, controlled by opposing political factions, were the bitterest of enemies, but in jail, their acquaintance with Bob gave them a common ground, and they talked of how the civil war in Kingston might be stopped. It was Massop, a thinker despite his sinister reputation, who had the idea for the so-called Peace Movement. The plan was simple: the two warring parties would agree to a cease-fire and begin to negotiate peace in the ghettos. To seal the pact, Bob would be brought back to Jamaica, his safety guaranteed by the people who shot him, in order to play at a Peace concert dedicated to the new movement. Eventually, Massop reasoned, peace in the ghettos would end the army's repression of his gang, and Massop and his ilk could resume their lives of racketeering. The hardest part of the plan was convincing Bob Marley to return. Claudie Massop wasn't in a position to approach Bob directly, because he was a JLP man and Bob assumed that the JLP was still out to kill him. So Massop and Marshall approached the leader of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, Vernon Carrington, to be the official sponsor of the Peace Movement and to act as intermediary between it and Bob.

Members of the Twelve Tribes visited Bob in Miami and told him of the plan, urging him to accept. Bob replied that he would not return to Jamaica until he received a personal guarantee from Claudie Massop that he and his family would be safe. The delegation offered to fly Massop to Miami, but Bob didn't want any gunmen near his family and proposed instead that a meeting be held on neutral ground in London, early in February.

During those visits, Bob received some new Twelve Tribes teachings, ideas that became part of Bob's thinking and were repeated again and again, especially in interviews, for the rest of his life. It was a complex system of beliefs, difficult to synthesize or summarize, that held that common astrology was an evil Babylonian science. Was not Aquarius the name of a Roman god? And was not Rome the headquarters of Babylon and thus the source of all evil in the world,

with the pope sitting as Anti-Christ? According to the Twelve Tribes, black people should renounce astrology and identify instead with the biblical twelve sons of Jacob, and be recognized as the true lost tribes of Israel, struggling in Babylonian captivity, yearning for redemption and Zion. Bob Marley was no longer an Aquarius: he was now completely Joseph, and his safety was guaranteed by prophecy: 'The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, the king of Israel.' It was trying to explain the doctrine of the Twelve Tribes that occasionally earned Bob Marley, not the most articulate of men, epithets of 'screwy' and 'deluded' from the music press.

The time came for Bob to meet Claudie Massop. Bob was still unsure of who had ambushed his house fourteen months earlier, and told Massop that the JLP could not guarantee his safety if it wasn't their men who attacked him. At that point, Bob said, Massop admitted that the shooting was political, that JLP elements had done it, but that all was forgotten and Bob should come home and help stop his beloved Jamaican ghetto youth from dying like flies in the burning city.

In Jamaica, there was consternation in PNP circles that Marley was seeing Massop, and that PNP interests were being poorly represented by Bucky Marshall, a henchman so small-time that not even Anthony Spaulding, the party's top political enforcer, had heard of him. The PNP quickly sent another old friend of Bob's, a militant ghetto captain named Tony Welch, to London to join the talks. The three men lived together for a week and negotiated a pact that called for a truce in the Kingston ghettos, endorsed by a concert with Bob Marley and the Wailers. On 23 February the announcement was made officially from London; the concert was set for 22 April. Later, Bob spoke of the meeting and of his hopes for the Peace Movement. 'The unity is the best thing that ever happen in Jamaica. The youths have a chance to turn themselves around. The two badmen like Claudie [Massop] and Tony [Welch], I see to it that they come together and talk and shake hand. And then we go back together and live as brethren . . . because the youth realize that dem grow with me for so long. I am a man who grow up in Darling Street, Back O' Wall, Trench Town, Ghost Town, Concrete Jungle, all those places they say is rebels' area . . . I neither go right nor left. I go straight ahead, see? I can't unite the JLP or the PNP because these are two organizations set up to fight against each other. That is called politics and I'm not into those things. We are talking about *Rasta*. We black people have a root. We are uniting regardless of whether you are PNP or JLP, regardless of what you are defending.'

In March Bob returned to Jamaica to a jubilant welcome from friends and family. Once again the lights burned late at 56 Hope Road, the sound system blared, and rehearsals started for the next world tour, for which the Peace concert was to be the first show. Bob made a triumphant progress through the worst ghetto neighbourhoods in Kingston as a demonstration of solidarity with the Peace Movement. At the same time, the Wailers were regrouping, being joined by some of the old members. Al Anderson was rehired and paired with Junior Marvin for the two-guitar sound that Bob liked. Earl 'Wire' Lindo was back in Kingston, and encouraged by his replacement, Tyrone Downie, came to the rehearsals at Hope Road. Tyrone says, 'I really care for Wire; I respect him and I copied him a lot to get my chops down. He came back to Jamaica and wasn't doing anything and needed money and he was like – he wasn't crazy, but he was into his head. People didn't understand him. He was frustrated because he's a great writer and composer.' As soon as Wire showed up, Bob invited him back into the band.

The Wailers' new album, *Kaya*, was also released in March and provoked surprise and criticism. The ten tracks from the London sessions had been remixed into a mellow pastiche of love songs and easy-skanking dance tunes, with barely a hint of Bob's usual defiance and rebellion. Given a very bright mix like a rock record, *Kaya* was uncharted territory for most of the Wailers fans, and Bob was accused of going soft and selling his soul to the international pop business. The opening track, 'Easy Skanking', set a theme of peace and harmony, with Bob crooning about '*takin' it easy, takin' it slow*'. 'Kaya', a Rasta word for marijuana, was an updated version of a song the Wailers had cut for Lee Perry years before, a doper's lovely vision of rising above the clouds and the falling rain. 'Is This Love' was a touching declaration inspired by Bob's romance with Cindy Breakspeare, as was 'Satisfy My Soul', a highly-charged song of passion and sex that also had been recorded for Lee Perry as 'Don't Rock The Boat'. The side was rounded off by a sinister version of the counting song, 'Sun Is Shining', another Upsetter label oldie. *Kaya*'s second side was slightly more provocative. 'She's Gone' and 'Misty Morning' (the latter one of the strangest songs Bob ever recorded) dealt with the cooling of the Breakspeare affair. 'Crisis' described the brutal conditions that had led to the Peace Movement: '*They still killing, killing the people/And they having having having lots of fun.*' The album's most important number was the trenchant 'Running Away', a talking-reggae in which Bob, performing in a curious sing-song voice, describes some of his guilt and self-doubt over the shooting: *You must have done something you*

don't want nobody to know about . . . Lord, something wrong, you must have done something wrong, why you can't find where you belong.

Asked by interviewers what had happened to his protest lyrics, Bob tried to explain: 'How long must I protest the same thing? I sing "Get Up Stand Up" and up till now people don't get up. So I must still sing "Get Up Stand Up"? I am not going to sing the same song again . . . I do not want to be a prisoner. I don't want to see people suffer and sing as if I'm glad to see people suffer and to make money off of that. I want people to live big and have enough.'

In March Bob went briefly to New York and was installed in a suite at the Essex House Hotel on Central Park South in order to give interviews promoting *Kaya* and the Peace Movement. Don Rojas of the black newspaper *Amsterdam News* asked Bob about his many critics and detractors. 'Dem cyaan get me out so easy,' Bob replied. 'Dem 'ave fe try harder than that. Dem seh me is a traitor to my people. No. No. No matter what propaganda dem spread about me, I remain true to the masses. No man can change that.'

Then Bob was asked about the allegations of racetrack racketeering in Jamaica.

He answered, 'Me nuh gamble yunno, Rasta! Man in Jamaica seh me a-win race horse. Me? I-man is a *saint*. My only vice is plenty woman. Other than that, I-man is a saint to all dem accusation.' Then he launched into a discourse on the anti-astrology doctrine of the Twelve Tribes: 'Plenty people read horoscope but all dem signs is nothin' but Roman gods. That mean, is Rome many people dealing with. But when you know you is one of the twelve sons of Jacob, then you know yourself as an African. Man is a whole universe in himself.' On the Peace Movement, Bob was enthusiastic and fervent. 'I really respect the brethren that started it. It's a great achievement. And dis is it! *Dis is it!* Dis is blackman redemption. *Dis is it!!*'

The Peace concert held at Kingston's National Stadium on 22 April 1978 was the high point of Bob's career as far as Jamaica was concerned. Preparations for the event were feverish around Hope Road, with the Wailers rehearsing under the heavy police security provided by the Manley government. During breaks Bob would come outside to juggle a soccer ball in the asphalt courtyard, a diminutive figure in T-shirt and tight warm-up pants, gold chains around his neck and long locks pent up in a crocheted red and white tam. Claudie Massop hung around the compound, a shadowy figure bedecked in gold jewellery, unintimidated by the squad of police guarding Tuff Gong in bullet-proof vests and carrying loaded shotguns.

The concert was held on a Saturday, and all day the streets of Kingston were swarming with people heading for the stadium. There was a large contingent of foreign press to cover the event, which many thought might not only bring peace to Kingston and raise funds for Twelve Tribes projects in the ghettos, but also provide the vehicle for the reunion of the original Wailers. Peter Tosh was prepared to play with his own group, but Bunny Wailer was boycotting the concert. He was one of many Jamaicans who were cynical about the Peace Movement and its impossibly optimistic aims.

By early evening the stadium was filled. Arranged in the front rows were Prime Minister Manley, Opposition Leader Seaga, and most of the Jamaican politicians and judges. Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones (who had just signed Peter Tosh to a recording contract) was in a conspicuous seat near the stage. Hundreds of armed police lurked around, watching for trouble.

The first half of the concert featured the cream of reggae's young singers, trios and DJs, all backed by Lloyd Parkes and the We The People band. Dennis Brown, Culture, the Meditations, Dillinger, LeRoy Smart, Trinity, the Mighty Diamonds, Althea and Donna, Junior Tucker and Bongo Herman each played brief sets. After a long intermission, the night's big attractions came on. Jacob Miller and Inner Circle sounded hot and brash, followed by local hero Big Youth and an incongruous soul singer named Beresford Hammond, who was riding a string of hit singles in Jamaica.

Peter Tosh was up next, backed by one of the most potent bands in reggae, Word Sound and Power, propelled by the genius drummer Sly Dunbar and bassist Robbie Shakespeare. The audacious Tosh looked out at the crowd and realized he had a captive audience of the entire Jamaican political establishment. Pointing a long black finger at the nation's white and Creole élite, Tosh harangued them for half an hour on Rasta political economy and the evils of the system, which Peter referred to as the shit-stem. Tosh then openly taunted the assembled police by firing up and smoking a huge ganja cigar. Tosh's monologue was as obscene as it was brave and it deeply offended the politicians and the police officials. But high up in the stadium seats, the common people were on their feet, cheering Tosh on with great bursts of applause. (A month after the Peace concert, Tosh was arrested on the street for smoking a joint and severely beaten in a police station.)

After Tosh's blistering performance with Word Sound and Power, the *akete* drumming ensemble Ras Michael and the Sons of Negus played while the Wailers set up. It was almost midnight when Bob jumped on stage to a tremendous ovation from the crowd and the

Wailers exploded into 'Trench Town Rock'. The whole stadium seemed to shake as Bob, dressed in jeans and a wheat-coloured garment of soft burlap, locks writhing like a nest of pythons, directed the Wailers in a vulcanizing display of the power of fast reggae rock. The set was based on the *Exodus* songs, Bob tenderly singing 'Natural Mystic' and assuming his magisterial, cruciform pose during 'War'. The climax of the show was 'One Love', when Bob asked Michael Manley and Edward Seaga to join him on stage and clasp hands to symbolize the government's support of the Peace Movement. Edward Seaga mounted the stage quickly, but Michael Manley held back at first. He felt that the Peace Movement was a cynical plot by the JLP to get the pressure off their gangsters and goon squads, and didn't want to be seen shaking Edward Seaga's hand in public. He knew that the Twelve Tribes truce wouldn't hold. But eventually he mounted the stage and stood next to an ecstatic, tranced-out Bob, who grabbed the two leaders' right hands and held them over his head for all to see. It was an electric, historic moment for Jamaica. Then, while the little singer in the middle finished his song, Manley and Seaga seemed to freeze as they shook hands, looking uncomfortable and remote. Later, when Bob saw a video of the scene, he commented, 'Guiltiness rest on their conscience.' The concert ended on the Wailers' plea for Rasta brotherhood and unity, 'One Love'.

But as soon as Bob got used to being home again, it was time to depart on the longest, most important, most gruelling tour of the Wailers' career. Known as the '*Kaya* 78' tour, it would take the intrepid band of natty dreads as far from Trench Town as one could go. By the end of the year, the Wailers would become one of the top concert attractions of the world, filling stadia and big indoor arenas wherever they wanted to go.

The Kaya 78 tour was originally scheduled to begin in Tampa, Florida, in early May and then pass through Miami, Atlanta, New Orleans, and the Texas towns of Houston, Dallas and Austin. But health problems forced Junior Marvin to miss the early dates, which were then cancelled because Junior's sensational stage movements were crucial to a tour that depended on Bob Marley conserving his strength and protecting his still-tender right foot. The tour was rescheduled to begin in Ohio on 19 May instead.

Bob used the extra time for a quick trip to London to make promotional videos for the two singles that Island had released from *Kaya*, 'Is This Love' and 'Satisfy My Soul'. Tuff Gong in Jamaica had simultaneously released Bob's newest roots single, 'Blackman Redemption', which celebrated the Peace Movement with Rasta slogans, a good and hard roots groove and the tough, impacted horn sound Bob

loved. The video for 'Is This Love' showed Bob at a children's party at the Keskidee Centre in London, with black and white kids playing together, ending with the laughing children dancing circles round a delighted Bob out in the street.

The 1978 edition of the touring Wailers began on 19 May at the Music Hall in Cleveland and was the tightest, cleanest-sounding, most obsessively rehearsed band in the history of reggae. Bob, the Wailers and the I Threes had reached a point of musical telepathy that allowed for extended jazz-like improvising in showpieces like 'War' and 'Exodus'. It was a perfection that had been earned by Bob's relentless demands for band practice. Tyrone Downie remembers the regimen: 'When on tour or just rehearsing, Bob was so obsessed. You wake up in the day and all you're supposed to think of is come up there and rehearse 'til you're too tired and it's too dark.' And if a Wailer made a mistake, especially during a show, Bob would mark it. 'He just wanted it to be like we all know it's supposed to be. And whoever wasn't doing it right, he told them either to listen to the record, ask somebody who knows, try to do it, or don't play. He wasn't rude, but very straightforward, a ghetto street person, aggressive, a little ignorant of manners. He just reacted naturally, from inside himself.' During the tour the Wailers rehearsed every day, and problems from a previous concert would be hammered out with Family Man at the next show's soundcheck. Rita remembers Bob always reminding the musicians of things they already knew, and irritating the band, who wanted to be depended on to play the right way. Bob was the Wailers' conductor, and he ran the Wailers the way an imperious Viennese maestro might run a symphony orchestra. 'He wouldn't stop until he got a thing right,' Judy Mowatt says. 'I mean, if it takes six hundred times. Sometimes we got tired of repeating the same thing over and over, but he *never* got tired. And we did it just to please him, even though we feel a little disgusted inside doing the same thing over again.'

The Wailers went on the road with the most modern sound system and the latest hardware. The double guitar mix was very rockish, with Junior's jangly, tinny Stratocaster balanced by the rounder, more bluesy tones of Al Anderson's Gibson Les Paul. (Junior's Stratocaster had been a present from Eric Clapton, who wanted to make a gesture when he visited the Wailers backstage; at Bob's suggestion, Clapton gave Junior the old Strat that he had used to record the *Disraeli Gears* album when he was with Cream.) The two Wailers keyboardists could reproduce any sound Bob wanted, Wire with his 'roots Rhodes' organ and B3 clavinet, Tyrone with his high-tech Oberheim synthesizers and every new keyboard toy on the market. The rhythm section – Family

Man, Carly, Seeco – provided the bedrock reggae against which the more rocky players like Junior and Tyrone had to contend if they wanted to push the beat. Occasionally Carly Barrett (called 'Field Marshal' within the group) would play too fast, and Bob would get on his case about sticking to the basic 'one-drop' framework of reggae music.

After Cleveland, the Wailers played Columbus, Madison, Chicago, Milwaukee and Minneapolis, selling out everywhere they played. With only a day's rest between gigs, the tour moved in June on to Pittsburg, Rochester, New York, Detroit, Philadelphia, Boston, Montreal, Toronto, Buffalo, New York, and Washington. In every city Bob worked hard at promotion, giving dozens of interviews and visiting every important radio station in every town. As for the rest of the band, Al Anderson remembers that they were on the rampage all the time. In every city there were beautiful young women available, attracted by Bob and the music, and there were always plenty left over for the band when Bob had made his choice. 'It was like a party,' Al says. 'There were almost never any problems amidst the band. The trouble came from outside influences – too many sharks and only one piece of meat.' In spite of other musicians offering Bob cocaine and lovely young girls showing up backstage with the finest Peruvian flake, Al maintains that he never saw Bob take it. He recalls the late rock guitarist Tommy Bolin holding a loaded coke spoon up to Bob's nose, and Bob blowing the powder away.

On 15 June, during a five-day rest and promotion stop in New York between the Buffalo and Washington shows, Bob took part in a ceremony that was extremely moving for everyone present. At a press conference at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Bob was presented with the Third World Peace Medal by all the African delegations to the United Nations. Bob was deeply and visibly moved when Senegal's Mohammadu Johnny Seka gave a tribute to Bob's efforts for equal rights and justice, and presented him the medal 'on behalf of *five hundred millions* of Africans'. At the subsequent press conference, Bob was asked if his music was less revolutionary now than it had been. 'No . . . Y'see . . . when you fight revolution, you use guns! A-true! If you fight a revolution, you use guns. Well, me no really want talk about revolution until me have guns, right? So me no want talk about revolution cos me nuh know if me *ever* get guns. Y'see, we don't mek guns yunno. I want check ya now: even in Africa, we find seh the gun me buy kill my brother with, is *white* man we 'ave fe buy the gun from.'

Reporter: 'We're not speaking about guns, we're speaking about music.'

Bob: 'Well, yeah. The music is the *biggest* gun, because it *save*. It nuh kill, right? The other gun lick off ya head!'

On Saturday, 17 June, the Wailers played a sold-out Madison Square Garden in New York. At last, reggae on Broadway. The long show began with 'Trench Town Rock' and drew from every phase of Wailers music. The final number, 'Jamming', drew a tumultuous ovation and was followed by a long medley of 'Get Up Stand Up', 'War' and 'Exodus'. The high spirits the Wailers projected were caught by *New York Times* pop critic John Rockwell in his review of the show two days later: 'Ultimately, the reason for both the unparochial impact of Marley's Rastafarianism and the success of the concert was his fusion of music with politics and mysticism. Mr Marley's images of exodus, resistance and paradise on earth aren't just Jamaican or even confined to undeveloped parts of the world; they can speak to everyone through the power of his music as a modern-day Utopian vision.'

After a final show at Lenox, Massachusetts, the Wailers flew to London to begin a month of European dates. In interviews Bob denounced Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols because Rotten, like many snobbish white reggae fans, had taken to criticizing the Wailers' music in favour of Jamaica's rootsier, more primitive musicians. One reporter asked Bob whether the National Front worried him. 'Worry me? Bloodclaat! Dem want fuck wit' me, dem bloodclaat, I and I give dem pure war. Fuck dem!' Late in June the Wailers videotaped a soaring version of 'Satisfy My Soul' for BBC television before embarking for sold-out shows in Paris, Ibiza, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Oslo, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Brussels, and a final outdoor music festival back in Staffordshire in England. Bob preferred playing in Europe. He felt the audiences were more understanding than in America, and he would let himself go further in Europe. 'Bob worked on inspiration,' Rita says. 'In concert he gets very emotionally involved. He closes his eyes – that mean he lock off this world completely, on a different level of communicating. It is a natural, spiritual thing that happen to him each time he goes on stage. He gets involved spiritually. He gets *in spirit*. The I Threes saw spiritual things happen to Bob onstage that no one else was conscious of. Languages, Bob talking in tongues in his songs.'

From London, the Wailers flew to Vancouver to begin an arduous ten-day tour of the west coast of Canada and the States. After shows in Seattle and Portland, the band reached San Francisco on 20 July to play the Greek Bowl in nearby Berkeley. Guitarist Ron Wood of the Rolling Stones showed up backstage and introduced himself to Bob, who didn't know who he was.

On the following day, 21 July, the Wailers were backstage at the

Starlite Amphitheater in Los Angeles, preparing for the show, when Peter Tosh showed up accompanied by Mick Jagger. After having been dropped by CBS after two excellent albums, Tosh had been signed by the Stones, who were guiding his career in hopes of jumping on the reggae bandwagon. Backstage there was talk of Jagger joining the Wailers for a number, but Bob decisively vetoed the idea despite Don Taylor's urging, saying that people had paid to see the Wailers, not some English rock singer. Tosh and Jagger watched the show from backstage, and at the show's emotional climax, the encore of 'Get Up Stand Up', Peter Tosh strode on stage and grabbed the mike from Bob to sing the battle cry the two of them had written together. As Tosh sang the verses, Bob danced around him with a delirious smile, and the two reggae masters blasted the chorus home to wild cheering from the audience. Bob and Tosh walked off, and in the wings, Bob stuck out his hand. When Peter slapped it, Bob said, 'Bwai, the Pope feel *that* one.' Two weeks later, Pope Paul VI died in Rome. Six weeks after that, his successor, Pope John Paul I, died as well. The Wailers thought this ominous, a true sign from Jah that the foundations of Babylon were about to shake.

The final show of the West Coast tour was in Santa Barbara on 23 July, Haile Selassie's birthday. Before a vast red, green and gold backdrop bearing the Emperor's image, Marley performed a spine-tingling show which ended with twelve thousand fans, ninety per cent of them white, chanting in unison the words, 'Rastafari! Rastafari! Rastafari!'

It was another of those semi-miraculous moments the Wailers were famous for. Afterwards a reporter asked Bob about the rare phenomenon in America of white people following a black man. 'Is God who mek everybody,' Bob answered, 'and him mek a way for the black man that the white man have to follow, because out of the black man came the white man, all white men. It's Ham, Shem and Japheth yunno, the sons of Noah. Ham the black, Shem the Asian, and Japheth the white man, all come out of Noah. Tha mean the black man follow the white man in his direction for a time, then His Majesty come and stand up and say, "Wait! Something wrong!" What we black people cannot deal with in America is colour prejudice. You mustn't bow to the white man. You must be *superior* to him. That means you cannot be prejudice, because if you are superior, how can you be prejudice? Now we are not saying you have to mingle with them now. But you cannot walk with that half-and-half thing. . . . We are superior people, but dem guys sort of took our thing and turned it back upon we. You have to show people who God is, man, *superior*, and deal with it.'

The Wailers' last night in Los Angeles was spent at a party in their honour at an exclusive disco, the Daisy. Every black star in the city was there, and Bob danced for hours with Diana Ross' sister. It was sunrise when they got back to their motel.

From Los Angeles the Wailers made up the cancelled southern US dates before returning to Jamaica. Meanwhile, in England, Blackwell was working on a live double album culled from the London, Paris, Copenhagen and Amsterdam shows. It was a heavy rock guitar album at Bob's direction; he had urged Al and Junior to be dominant on the dates that were recorded. The two guitarists subsequently tried to keep that feeling of star guitar reggae alive in the band, but Bob said no, not for the Wailers. It was only a commercial sound he wanted for the album that would eventually be called *Babylon By Bus*; the title came from the headline of an article by a British writer who was being bussed, along with other scribes, to the Wailers' show in Staffordshire. The bus broke down on the road, and all the press missed the show. Neville Garrick found the clipping and titled the album while assembling the intricate die-cut album jacket in London that autumn.

Back in Jamaica, plans were being made for the Wailers' Asian swing. Bob's foot had healed well, there was football all the time and great anticipation for the tour through Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

Bob was eager to record some new music at the new Tuff Gong studio that had nearly been completed at the Hope Road house in his absence, supervised by Diane Jobson. But the equipping of the studio was still to be done, and Bob was fairly dripping with new material; the Wailers, after all, hadn't recorded many new songs since the *Exodus* sessions in London almost two years before. While he waited for his studio to be finished, Bob got some of it off his chest by recording five demos on a four-track recorder under Lee Perry's supervision. The titles included 'Jungle Fever', 'Give Thanks And Praises', 'I Know A Place (Where We Can Carry On)', 'Who Colt The Game' [about an upset game of dominoes] and the dangerous-sounding 'Burn Down Babylon': *Come we go bu'n down Babylon one more time/Come we go bu'n down Babylon one more time/Lord dem saaf, Lord dem saaf/So come we go bu'n down Babylon one more time.*

The Asian tour was a triumph. The band had never played in that part of the world, and pandemonium attended the gigs. In New Zealand, Bob received a Maori tribal greeting from a dozen women before the Auckland show. They held him and rubbed his nose and cheeks with theirs. The dreadlocked poet flushed deeply with pleasure.

When the *Kaya* 78 tour finally wound down, Bob was exhausted. He

planned to rest at his Miami house for a month, and then return to Jamaica to record in his new studio. Dozens of new songs had accumulated in his head, and from them would come Bob's undisputed masterpiece, the album *Survival*.

9 · ZIMBABWE

Every man gotta right/To decide his own destiny/And in this judgment/There is no partiality/So arm and arm, with arms/We will fight this little struggle . . . (from 'Zimbabwe')

Bob Marley had been hoping to travel to Ethiopia since 1976, but the war between Ethiopia and Somalia over the province of Eritrea had presented insurmountable visa problems. Bob finally got a visa in late 1978, aided by Alan Cole, who had disappeared after the Hope Road shooting and now turned up in Addis Ababa as coach of the Ethiopian airline soccer team. Flying from London to Nairobi Bob made his way to Addis Ababa where he visited sites associated with Haile Selassie and Ethiopian history, lived on a religious communal farm called Shashamani, went to nightclubs featuring the brazen and passionate Ethiopian pop-singing style, and attended a giant rally staged by Ethiopia's Marxist government in support of the liberation movement in Rhodesia, which Ethiopians were already calling by its African name, Zimbabwe. The mass rally broadened Bob's understanding of the issues in Zimbabwe, which he had been following for years, and made a deep impression on his identity as an African. The visit changed his life and his music.

He started to work on a song called 'Zimbabwe' while he was still in Ethiopia, which like most African states was preoccupied with the bitter guerrilla war being fought by black nationalists against a racist white regime. The struggle had begun back in 1890, but Rhodesia remained a rich British colony until 1965, when Ian Smith declared Rhodesia independent in order to preserve the threatened dominance of the nation's white minority. While the United Nations imposed economic sanctions and the British appealed for reason, Rhodesia continued as an apartheid state, ensuring the continued oppression and

humiliation of the black tribal majority. In 1971 the British proposed a settlement for Rhodesia in which African majority rule would have been postponed until the turn of the century. The plan was rejected as ludicrous by the African population, and later that year sporadic guerrilla attacks began on white farms in north-east Rhodesia.

By the time Bob arrived in Africa in 1978, the Rhodesia problem was reaching its climax. The Rhodesian army was winning small battles against the Patriotic Front, but the whites were losing the war just the same. Britain, the United States, all the African countries, even neighbouring South Africa, were demanding a political settlement between the Smith regime and the rebel leaders, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe. White Rhodesians were emigrating by the thousands, and army supplies were low due to UN sanctions. Ian Smith was attempting to bypass the guerrillas with an internal settlement with moderate Africans; he would install a black bishop, Abel Muzorewa, as a token prime minister. In the bush, Nkomo and Mugabe swore to destroy the internal settlement.

This was the backdrop of Bob Marley's most important song.

While Bob was in Africa, the Tuff Gong business in Kingston was thriving under Diane Jobson, who was now running Tuff Gong as a multi-million-dollar recording company. With Bob due back in Jamaica by the end of the year, the various Rasta artisans were rushing to install the equipment for the new studio in time to record the tunes for the album that was then called *Black Survival*. The first music to be recorded in the new studio was Judy Mowatt's *Black Woman* sessions, which included an obscure old song of Bob's called 'Down In The Valley' and Mowatt's 'Joseph', a song (written after the shooting) about the sense of paternity and almost religious respect the Wailers family had for Bob. *Black Woman* was completely remixed at Tuff Gong as an experiment to test levels and break in the studio for the *Black Survival* sessions.

When Bob returned to Jamaica, it was the beginning of a new era for the Wailers. He was brimming with ideas, punch-lines and catch-phrases, many of them lifted from the Psalms and Proverbs in the Old Testament. Bob's experiences in Africa had imbued his music with new hopes for black unity and an edgy but resolute new militance that was most obvious when the first of the songs, 'Ambush', was released by Tuff Gong in Jamaica early in 1979. A graphic portrayal of his near-assassination, 'Ambush' described a black nation in which factions fought for power, corrupted by imposed economics and 'political strategy'. The bumping chorus tells what happens when a man resists

the system: '*Ambush in the night/All guns aiming at me/Ambush in the night/They opened fire on me/Ambush in the night/Planned by society/ Ambush in the night/Protected by His Majesty.*' 'Society' was a ghetto term for the Jamaican ruling class.

The new studio was small (some musicians said it was claustrophobic) but well-run and equipped with the latest and best recording systems; it could produce terrific keyboard, horn and vocal sounds. Patterned in many ways after Bob's favourite studio, Criteria in Miami, Tuff Gong also had what guitarists felt was the best guitar sound in reggae music. It was tiny, and when the Wailers were recording and eight musicians, drums, two or three keyboards and all the equipment were packed in, it was an extremely tight fit. But the music emerged as the tightest, clearest reggae yet to be recorded by the band. Added to Bob's perfectionism was that of Alex Sadkin, the new producer brought in by Chris Blackwell to temper Wailers music for the international marketplace; some felt Sadkin's precise attention to detail robbed some of the recordings of their raw soul and spontaneity. But when the musicians were listening to the playbacks they knew that *Black Survival* was going to be *murder*.

The next single track to appear in public after 'Ambush' was 'Babylon Feel This One', which was never formally released as a record but was given by Bob to Brigadier Jerry, the DJ of the Twelve Tribes' sound system, Gemini Sound. 'Babylon Feel This One' existed only as a dub-plate, an acetate disc over which a DJ could toast with exclusive rights, and it was extremely hot at the dances, a couple of which Bob attended in order to see people dancing to the thick, heavy riff laid down by the Barrett brothers. Another out-take from the *Black Survival* period was called 'Wounded Lion In The Jungle', a tortured ballad that reflected the depression Bob was experiencing at the time.

Bob didn't complain, so only the people closest to him noticed how raw his feelings were and how short his temper and attention span had become. Some thought that Bob's anti-cancer medication was making him ill, while others felt his melancholy was caused by other things. The Peace Movement hadn't worked, the truce had broken and the violence in western Kingston was worse than ever. Claudie Massop was shot by police at a road-block in February 1979; rumours abounded that he or parties unknown had stolen the money earned by the Peace concert. The autopsy found forty-two bullets in his body. Bob's old recording mentor Lee Perry, one of the few men Bob called a genius, had suffered a mental breakdown and was in the asylum of Bellview Hospital in eastern Kingston. Bob's black mood extended to his family and friends as well. He roughed up Rita one night when he found her

with another man. He had an old friend from the ghetto, one of the Hope Road regulars, stuffed into the boot of a car and kept away for a while for some major transgression. And there was the beating he gave his young step-sister Pearl at his house in Miami after she had been fresh to him. Cedella recalls, 'He want to let her know that he put diaper on her and he didn't want her frownin' at him or anything, and he whipped her in her room properly. But everybody in the house cried, because it wasn't like him to do that, and even he was upset. Later I went to him and seh, "What happen?" And he said, "None a you nuh talk to me." He vex with everybody then, and I didn't trouble him.'

Back in Kingston, Bob redoubled his efforts to finish the new album in time for the American tour projected for the autumn of 1979. He strummed his guitar for twelve hours a day, working on songs. Many of the crack Kingston session musicians who worked on the album – drummer 'Santa' Davis, bassist Val Douglas, 'Chico' Chin on trumpet – remember that Bob was abrupt and distracted during the sessions. One afternoon, after failing to get a satisfactory guitar and keyboard overdub on the album version of 'Ambush', Bob called in Jimmy Beckford, a white musician who was the premier harmonica player on the reggae session scene. Half-way through Beckford's take, Bob forgot what he was doing and wandered outside to join a football game in progress in the front yard.

Sometimes, though, Bob's shyness and reticence were mistaken for anger. His friend Neville Garrick says that Bob was so shy that the word 'screwface' might have been invented for him. 'Bob built a shield with his face. He knew how to use his face so when someone want to approach him and Bob don't know him, they have to stand back and not bother him. That was his defence of the magnetism he had, or else the people would have squashed him. Sometimes I read the face and read the temperament and I say, *cho*, yunno, well I can check and if he don't want to talk we can talk another time.'

To combat his melancholy, Bob would play as hard as he worked. Despite his doctors' warnings not to irritate his bruised foot with football, Bob continued to juggle the soccer ball that was a feature of Hope Road life. The ganja chalice was omnipresent, as were the constant streams of girls attracted to Bob's scene by his own magnetism and the promise of life in the Rasta fast lane. Bob's tenth child was conceived at this time with Yvette Morris, a secretary at Tuff Gong who had been devoted to Bob for years. Several of the flashy Jamaican girls that Bob liked to party with in these days later claimed to be mothers of his children, but Bob kept close tabs on all the women by whom he had offspring. He told Diane Jobson that he could always tell one of his

children by its mouth; if the child seemed sometimes to speak from the side of its face, it was definitely his. Yvette Morris gave birth to a daughter, Bob's last child, who was named Makeba Janesta Marley. Diane Jobson once made a remark to Bob about the girls with whom he was dallying, and Bob rebuked her for it. 'I think it was actually a kind of warning,' Diane says. 'Like if I ever saw him with another woman, a sister who might be a glamour girl or a model type, in other words not a Rasta woman but a sporting child, a party girl, I wasn't to make any remark. It was like in the Bible where they were complaining that Jesus was eating with the publicans, and Jesus said, "He that is well is not in need of a physician." With regard to these women, Bob said that I was to have the attitude that there but for the grace of God go I. Because if it was not for the influence of him [Bob] who knows which way *I* might have gone. Bob used to say, "Diane, if *she* seh she love me, and *you* seh you love me, then *you must love her too!*" '

It took six months to complete the new album. Bob wanted it to sound as hot and as *black* as Stevie Wonder's sounded. And when it was released that summer as *Survival*, in order to appeal to Bob's white audience as well as the new black one he was courting, he got his wish. The music made at Tuff Gong studio was so alive that it seemed to jump out of the speakers.

Reggae studios in Jamaica tend to take on the personalities of their owners. Whereas the scene at Harry J's was relaxed and casual, the atmosphere at Tuff Gong was true to its name, a tough yard full of smart new BMWs and various cannibalized cars, populated by the heavies of the young Rasta community and various hoodlums and leeches from the slums looking for dope, women and a handout. If you hadn't been invited to Hope Road and weren't a regular, it wasn't a great place to hang out. So it was odd that one day in early June a white man in a coat and tie showed up at Tuff Gong asking for Bob Marley, saying he was from Boston and wanted Bob to come and play a benefit concert for African freedom-fighters in July, only a few weeks away. The man, whose name was Chester English, insisted on talking to Bob, but some of the motorbike boys and smartass Rasta youths with big chips on their shoulders started to hassle the white man, and were about to throw him out when Bob emerged from the house to see what the commotion was all about. The man repeated his story to Bob; he represented a group called AMANDLA, which was raising money for humanitarian and revolutionary causes in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia. Bob listened intently, and then told an aide to call AMANDLA's office in Boston to see if the story checked out. When word came back that the benefit would be held at Harvard Stadium in Boston and would include

Dick Gregory and Babatunde Olatunji, the Nigerian drummer, Bob agreed to do the benefit for a fee of $10,000. He turned to Chester English and said to tell his people when and where he was wanted, and he would be there. Then he walked back into the house.

The Wailers' first gig that year was held at Reggae Sunsplash II, the Jamaican music festival held at Jarrett Park in Montego Bay early in July. The band went on at 1.30 in the morning; the small stage was cluttered with equipment and people, and Bob moved in a tight circle wearing an Ethiopian striped sweater, brown leather pants and boots and a sensational mane of dreadlocks. It was the first Wailers concert in Jamaica since the Peace concert, and the band opened with old favourites 'Road-Block' and 'Them Belly Full' before dashing into newer songs. 'Rastaman Live Up' was fast and fiery in contrast to a slow, beautiful, declamatory version of 'No Woman No Cry', delivered as a great folk-poem to its native audience, picking up into reggae-rock with the chorus of '*Everything's gonna be all right now.*' They kept crackling with 'Hypocrite', an old song from the Ghost Town days which had just been reissued as a single on Tuff Gong with another classic, 'Nice Time', on the flip side. It was probably the only live performance of 'Hypocrite' ever given by the Wailers. It was followed by a slowish rendition of 'Lively Up Yourself', as sharp as a dangling machete, with a similar latent menace. 'That's what it boils down to,' a possessed Bob Marley shouted between verses; 'I got *war* in my shoes!' The encore was 'Get Up Stand Up', with Bob and the fast-dancing I Threes (Marcia heavy with child) bathed in sweat, which faded into an incredible 'Exodus'. Bob froze into a position holding in front of him an invisible object that could have been a grapefruit or a grenade. Drenched in spotlight, he stood immobile as he sang, eyes closed, small mouth open, sharp features, bushy eyebrows and scraggly Rasta beard shiny with perspiration. '*We know where we're going/We know where we're from/We're leaving Babylon/We're going to our father's land . . .*' The anthem put everyone into trance, and Bob was joined onstage by his sons Ziggy and Stevie who danced around him. A minute later another boy went on stage and began to dance, a tall Rasta child with a head of long locks who was said to be one of Bob's sons out of wedlock. The concert ended with Bob melted back into the band while the boys carried on upstage. Bob was revealed for what he was, a master musician of the new age, his sons as dancing boys in a timeless ritual of tribal musical tradition. Tuff Gong Night at Reggae Sunsplash II was a smashing success.

While rehearsing the band for the benefit show in Boston and

supervising the final mixes for the new album, Bob talked to Vivien Goldman of *Melody Maker*. Responding to a question on the lack of the usual Wailers' militance in *Kaya* he said, 'Me *too* militant. That's why me did *Kaya*, to cool off the pace . . . I don't have an army behind me. If I did I wouldn't care, I'd just get more militant. Because I'd know, well, I have fifty thousand armed youth and when I talk I talk from strength. . . . Maybe if I try to make a heavier tune than *Kaya* they would have tried to assassinate me because I come too hard. I have to know how to run my life, cos that's what I have, an' nobody can tell me to put it on the line, you dig? Because no one understands these things. These things are heavier than anyone can understand. People that aren't involved don't know it.'

Because 56 Hope Road had been transformed from a decrepit old house to a modern twenty-four-track studio and an up-to-date office complex with IBM typewriters and sophisticated communications gear, Bob was asked if he found it difficult to stay in touch with his ghetto roots. Bob was incredulous: 'Find it difficult? Watch now: you look into my yard – it's a ghetto. This is a ghetto you're looking at. Look out there – I've just brought the ghetto uptown.'

After expressing some reservation about Blackwell's stewardship of his music and telling Goldman that he was getting tired of saying the same things in interviews – he had been talking to reporters almost non-stop for six years – Bob was asked which bit of his career had meant the most to him. His answer took twenty years within its scope: 'I love the the development of our music, that's what I really dig about the whole thing. How we've tried to develop, really trying to understand what we're trying to do, yunno? It just grows. That's why every day people come forward with new songs. Music goes on for ever.'

On 19 July, the Wailers touring party – musicians, technicians, family and cook, twenty-five altogether – gathered at Hope Road, from where a bus took them to the airport for the flight to Boston and the AMANDLA benefit. Bob was excited about the show, since it was in support of his favourite cause and it offered a chance to try out some of the new songs before Boston's avid reggae audience. Also on the bill were Patti LaBelle, salsa star Eddie Palmieri, master drummer Olatunji and Dick Gregory, the black social activist who would act as master of ceremonies. Although Bob had originally said the Wailers would play for $10,000 to cover their travel expenses, Don Taylor had later raised the fee to $20,000 with a stipulation in the contract that Dick Gregory personally introduce the band. At a press conference before the show on 21 July, a reporter asked Bob how he could demand $20,000 when the show was a benefit for Africans fighting for their

freedom in the bush. Bob was angry and nonplussed, and began to attempt an answer when Dick Gregory stepped in and deflected the question. Later it was said that Bob hadn't known about the change in fee and was furious with Don Taylor.

The AMANDLA concert (short for the phrase *Amandla Ngawetu*, meaning 'power to the people' in the Shona language of Zimbabwe) was another of those epic Wailers shows where twenty-five thousand people filling Harvard University's football stadium were treated to a delicate, craftsman-like set that reprised the band's hits and introduced their hard new music. The police had asked that the Wailers go on in the afternoon to minimize the difficulties of a late concert in racially unstable Boston (the organizers had received bomb threats), so Bob came on at 3 pm in a khaki shirt and jeans as Dick Gregory was finishing a moving introduction. After blaming the US for 'what goes on over there in South Africa', Gregory introduced Marley as 'a young man who understands racism, who understands poverty, who understands *all* the hurts, and *he didn't let it defeat him*. He set out to share his joy, his love, his great respect, his religion, his *spiritual power* with the whole world. And we say to you, Brother Bob, we thank you, we thank you, we thank you!' As the crowd roared in appreciation Dick Gregory took Bob's hand and pulled it to his mouth and kissed it.

With the I Threes throwing their bare shoulders and dancing hard and frisky, Bob launched into a long show whose highlight was 'Exodus', with Olatunji sitting in on bongo drums. When the audience refused to stop cheering even after a long encore, the Wailers came back to offer the first public performances of 'Zimbabwe' and 'Wake Up And Live'. During the first, Bob brought the I Threes to centre stage and sang with his arms around his priestesses, the four of them swaying as Family Man led the band with his thunderous bass. It was always the most touching part of any Wailers show, and one that sometimes had a practical side, according to Judy Mowatt, who said that Bob occasionally joined his three singers to coax them back on key when they had strayed from the harmony Bob wanted to sing over. Then as 'Zimbabwe' melded into the war cry of 'Wake Up And Live', Bob Marley did something he had never done before. He made a speech, a dub screed for unity and brotherhood within the context of the song and its rhythm. It was a free-form meditation and exhortation, as fierce and direct as Bob Marley ever got on a stage: '. . . Third World struggling yunno, and we must come together for Zimbabwe . . . *yeah*! . . . Women and children shall fight this revolution . . . we can be free, we *must* be FREE yunno. Four hundred years plus, this captivity, so we want go home to we yard . . . Rastafari know that . . . *yes*! . . . Don't let

propaganda lead you astray, false rumours and false propaganda. Haile Selassie I the *Almighty*! . . . Zimbabwe must be free by 1983, Jah seh, *Africa must be free*! . . . So everyone have a right to decide his own destiny, *yeah*! . . . see me, looka dat, *Wake up and live y'all/Wake up and live/Life is one big road with lots of signs* . . . Put your feet in the dust . . . A people without knowledge of their past is no better than a tree without roots . . . C'mon children! *Yeah*! . . . I couldn't mek a speech, I could mek a speech, but I'm gonna tell ya that I'm gonna fight for my rights. I'm a Rasta man and we are Rasta people. Consciousness cover the earth . . . *Hey sisters*! Awake from your sleepless slumber, emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind, yunno what I'm saying? Babylon *burning*! It's vibration mek the whole world stop. *Burning*! No more force . . . *A free the people*! . . . Yunno something? We're gonna do it . . . with a nuclear bomb! *Wake up and live*! Rastafari, the Almighty God!! *With no apology*! . . . Yunno, it's time for us to be FREE!'

Bob furiously rubbed the front of his head as he sang, as if he were trying to imbue the spirit right into his skull. His khaki shirt and the I Threes' red, green and gold skirts were soaked in the heat of the July afternoon. It was the most inspired show many people had ever seen from Bob, and by the end of the day the AMANDLA organization had raised almost a quarter of a million dollars for African liberation. Twenty thousand people left the stadium after the Wailers' part of the show.

Survival, Bob Marley and the Wailers' ninth album for Island Records, was released that summer, not long after the AMANDLA concert. Longtime Wailers fans were relieved at the band's return to fire-and-brimstone militance, although it had a different setting. Marley's concerns had broadened from the perspective of a Jamaican sufferer to that of a pan-African freedom fighter, a man who had the world as a captive audience for his message of black survival and unity. The change was symbolized by Neville Garrick's cover art, the myriad parti-coloured flags of every African nation on a black background, divided by a diagram of Africans packed like sardines inside a slave ship bound for the West Indies.

'Wake Up And Live', co-written with Bob's friend Anthony Davis, opened the LP on a tight and biting note of rejuvenation, and featured a blistering saxophone battle between session players Dean 'Youth Sax' Frazier and 'Deadly' Hedley Bennett. Many of Marley's lyrics were lifted straight from the Bible. 'We're more than sand on the seashore/We're more than numbers' is a direct paraphrase of Hebrews

11:12. Verses of 'Africa Unite' were taken from Psalm 2. 'One Drop' referred to the primal reggae drumming style, and how this rhythm was like a spur prodding to higher consciousness and 'fighting against ism and schism', in other words, toward human unity and dignity. The album's centrepiece was 'Ride Natty Ride', which updated the saga of Bob's alter-ego Natty Dread, and celebrated his survival and dominance. 'So Much Trouble In The World' paved the way for the themes that dominated the second side of *Survival* – conflict, competition, black nationalism and survival. Conflict was represented by 'Zimbabwe', which would later be credited with helping create the climate that led to a political solution struggle in that country. 'Top Ranking' described in apostolic terms a political system of competition and murder that was the most Jamaican thing about an otherwise international perspective. But it was only a set-up for what followed, one of Bob Marley's most disturbing and, ironically, most beautiful songs. 'Babylon System', an *akete* drumming chant descended directly from the *burru* tradition, was a crushing indictment of a capitalist, industrial world that took human beings and used them for profit, grinding them in its evil machinery. '*Babylon system is the vampire/Sucking the children day by day/Sucking the blood of the sufferers.*' And in his most remarkable and touching eight lines, Bob issues a ringing declaration of black heritage and pride: '*We refuse to be/What you wanted us to be/We are what we are/And that's the way it's going to be/You can't educate I/For no equal opportunity/Talking about my freedom/People freedom and liberty.*'

The album ended with a brilliant rumination on the theme of survival. In the past year Bob had been jousting with the issues of nuclear power and atomic war. He thought both were manifestations of Babylon's final era, in that Marxism and capitalism would cancel each other out in a nuclear war, leaving a third world force – Rastafari – to inherit the earth. Africa will be free, he kept saying, by 1983. His favourite book that year was the apocalyptic, pop-scientific *The Late Great Planet Earth*. But on a more personal level, he was concerned that nuclear power and its attendant low-level radiation had given him the cancer that had robbed him of his greatest pleasure, all-out quick-striking football. And there was a sub-text to Marley's message here as well. Early in 1979 the Anglo-Jamaican dub poet Linton Kwezi Johnson had recorded a song called 'Reality Poem' that was widely interpreted in the reggae world as an attack on the appeal Rastafari had for black youth in the West: '*This is the age of reality/And some o' we a-deal with mythology/This is the age of science and technology/But some o' we a-check fe antiquity/When we cyaan face reality/Me leggo me clarity . . .*

Some get vision/And start preach religion/But dem cyaan mek decision when it come to a fight . . . This is the age of decision/Mek we leggo religion.' Bob's answer to this was 'Survival', which proclaimed: '*We're the survivors . . . in this age of technological inhumanity . . . scientific atrocity . . . atomic mis-philosophy/We're the survivors.*' And never one to 'leggo religion' Bob concluded: '*We've got to survive/But to live as one equal in the eyes of the Almighty.*'

Soon after *Survival* was released, the song 'Zimbabwe' struck Africa like a bomb. Within two months, African musicians in the West African recording centres of Dakar, Abadjan and Lagos had recorded cover versions of 'Zimbabwe' which sold well all over the continent, alongside the Island album and bootleg Lebanese cassettes. Years before, Bob Marley had been adopted by the guerrilla fighters of Zimbabwe's Patriotic Front in the bush; now the battle groups had a new anthem with which to fight. For them, the song helped win the war. And in Africa, as in much of the world, Bob Marley was becoming a household world.

As winter descended on North America in October 1979 the Wailers began a tour in support of *Survival* at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, an appropriate address since in Bob's mind the purpose of the tour was to cultivate his most elusive audience, black America. He had seen a quote from the writings of W. E. B. DuBois, the American black nationalist, that had stirred him: '. . . if the young Black American is going to survive and live a life, he must face the fact that however much he is an American, there are interests which draw him nearer to the dark people outside America than to his fellow white citizens.' To this end, Bob was touring to establish a Rasta presence in black America that would evolve into his ideal alternative to the rigours of socialism and capitalism. A black publicist was hired to coordinate interviews with black papers and magazines and appearances at important soul stations like New York's WLIB and WBLS.

After a three-hour Wailers set at the Philadelphia convention of the Black Music Association, a trade organization of black music professionals, Stevie Wonder joined the Wailers for the encore of 'Get Up Stand Up' and 'Exodus'. Sparks seemed to flow between the American superstar and his Jamaican counterpart.

Bob's health deteriorated as soon as he hit the chilly streets of New York in his quilted jacket and work boots. He caught a bad cold, but continued to walk between his usual hotel, the Essex House on Central Park South, and the midtown rehearsal studio ten blocks away, dragging an improbable retinue of stoned dreads (including reggae

singer Jacob Miller) along behind him. Despite a worsening sore throat and fatigue, he conducted daily seven-hour rehearsals with the horn players (Glen Da Costa and David Madden) who had been brought along from Kingston for the tour.

The Apollo shows, seven concerts on four nights, beginning on 26 October, were of historic proportions for the Wailers. Marcus Garvey had preached in the famous black vaudeville theatre on Harlem's 125th Street, and its box-like walls had rung to the music of the great heroes of black music – Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, Billie Holliday, Sam Cooke, James Brown. Despite what he called 'a crack in my throat' Bob deployed the band's superbly organized new shows, which began with the incantatory 'Natural Mystic' and ended with the show-within-a-show encore of 'Get Up Stand Up', 'War' and 'Exodus'. The songs now melted into each other like the shimmering hues on Joseph's coat of many colours, as the Wailers burned away behind Bob, now hollow-cheeked and haunted-looking, but who exploded with pent-up energy as the roar of his loyal audience poured over him.

As the Wailers continued on their seven-week tour of the United States (forty-seven shows scheduled in forty-nine days) Bob's cold failed to improve. All his energy was used to promote Island's 'Survival'/'Wake Up And Live' single at black stations around America. By the time the journalists came around for interviews at the end of the day, Bob was usually too tired. He would ask his articulate keyboard player Tyrone Downie to sit in, or DJ Michael 'Mikey Dread' Campbell who was part of the entourage, and most of the interviews from this tour quoted Tyrone's ardent analysis of Rasta life rather than Bob's. He was happy just to sit there and supervise the talk, adding an occasional aside if he felt well enough. One subject that irritated Bob enough for him never to refuse comment was disco music, which was then dominating pop culture all over the world, keeping the more aware and socially-evolved reggae movement in second place, much to the fury of the reggae musicians. A month earlier Peter Tosh had been quoted as saying, 'Death to disco, mon. I am here to make reggae the international music, because disco doesn't have the spiritual potential of reggae. The devil created disco, telling black people to get down all the time. But I-mon seh to black people, "get up stand up for your rights." ' Not to be outdone, Bob had his own analysis of disco: 'America is pure devilry, dem t'ings dat go on there. Dem just work with force and brutality. Dem lock out the punk thing because they see something is happening. So the oppressors bring another man to blind the youth to the truth, and dem call him – John Tra-vol-ta.' Nonetheless, despite disco, Bob had not only survived seven years as a

pop star but he also had an ever-growing following. As *New Musical Express* put it: 'Few major rock stars at the age of thirty-four can boast the same on and offstage vitality, commitment and creative genius that Marley continues to exhibit and which shows scant signs of disappearing. That the future holds new developments seems extremely likely, with Africa looming as the next target for musical conquest.'

In mid November the Wailers began to progress down the west coast of North America, beginning as before with a show at Vancouver. Backstage after the concert, Bob was visited by an Indian chief and members of his tribe who told him they regarded him as a prophet and wanted to see his spirituality for themselves. Bob had long been interested in Indians and was pleased by their calling on him. But his health was bad on the way to San Francisco, where guitarist Don Kinsey picked up the tour to sit in for a few dates.

'Bob was beginning to feel he was sick again by then,' Kinsey says. On the bus to the concert at Santa Cruz, Bob had told Kinsey that he was 'getting tired of this business'. Don said Bob's energy level must be slipping. He had never heard this kind of talk from Bob. There was a big press conference after the Santa Cruz show, attended by dozens of reporters firing questions at Bob, but he was flustered and confused, and couldn't think through or finish his answers. Tyrone, sitting next to Bob at the table, took over until the press had got what they wanted.

Yet Bob continued to work and compose during all of this. He had already written many of the songs for the Wailers' next album and was strumming the chords and experimenting with the lyrics of a new autobiographical tune he was crafting called 'Redemption Songs'.

On a late Tuesday afternoon in November, in the almost empty Roxy nightclub on Sunset Strip, the Wailers held a three-hour rehearsal for that night's show to benefit the Sugar Ray Robinson Foundation. It was to be the only nightclub-sized date of a stadium-weight tour. The Wailers wore a mixture of expensive leather and cheap army surplus, their locks pent up in bright, swollen knitted tams. In the club's lobby Al Anderson quietly worked out a new guitar riff on his unplugged Strat, while onstage Family adjusted the tone settings on his amplifier, feeling for the penetrating bass vibration that anchors the Wailers' sound. As the horn players walked in the door and the band began to slide into their groove, Bob stepped up and plugged in his Les Paul, wearing an intricate tam of red, green, gold and silver. A laconic 'Lively Up Yourself' slid into a perfect dub of 'Is This Love', Bob singing only a word or two from each verse, always on the off-beat: '*Is this . . ./Is this . . .*,' a gentle guitar break, and '*. . . love that I'm feeling?*'

As the evening passed the band changed instruments among

themselves and friends wandered in to jam. The band played all of *Survival*, Bob dubbing 'Zimbabwe' right and tight. As the session wound down, the Wailers played a twenty-minute version of the new 'Redemption Songs'. If Bob was thinking of giving the new song its début at the show that night, he changed his mind later. 'Redemption Songs' would remain a secret for another few months.

Bob's health improved while the Wailers were in southern California. Bob liked Los Angeles despite the hot, mood-swinging Santa Ana winds that blew the city dry during that time of year. Most of the band were living in a motel in West Hollywood, while Bob and his immediate retinue were installed in a rented house on Alta Vista, right off Sunset Strip. One late night after a concert, a large group gathered at the house to screen the videotape made the night of the Smile Jamaica concert in Kingston three years earlier. That afternoon Bob had been signing albums at Tower Records in Hollywood, and the house was full of glamorous black models and starlets drawn to the smokey scene by the powerful Rastaman. As the video started, Bob had wandered off and someone was sent to look for him, since he was keen to see it. He was found – blundered upon – in a bedroom where he was in the ardent embraces of one of his new girlfriends.

By now, Bob's generosity had become something of a legend. Never comfortable as a multi-millionaire, he gave money away to friends and causes in of thousands of dollars. His family estimates that he once gave away almost $200,000 in one month. So perhaps it wasn't so odd that Bob, at the urging of his old road manager Tony Garnett, financed a Tuff Gong record shop for him, located in the heart of LA's black Crenshaw section. Just before the Wailers left California for the tour's last stop, Bob gave Tony G a cheque for the new branch, telling him that eventually he planned to manufacture and distribute Wailers records in America independently of the big music monopolies. He said he would return the following year to inspect the new shop. The Wailers went on to Trinidad, where police fired teargas to keep the thousands of ticketless fans away from the site of the show.

The last date on the *Survival* tour was in Nassau, the Bahamas. It was a benefit for the United Nations' International Year of the Child. In addition Bob donated to the same cause the royalties from the song he had written for his own children four years before, and which his company, Tuff Gong, had just released. The record was by the Melody Makers (Sharon, Ziggy, Cedella and Stevie Marley) and was called 'Children Playing In The Streets'.

As the new decade came in, Bob's management team – Don Taylor,

Diane Jobson and Chris Blackwell – had important plans in store. After a short band visit to Africa, the Wailers would record a new album, to be called *Uprising*, followed by the biggest Wailers tour ever, making Bob conspicuously absent from the 1980 Jamaican general elections. The tour would cover most of Europe, every major North American market (sometimes on the same bill as Stevie Wonder) and then swing through Latin America before attempting the first major reggae tour of Africa in 1981. The name of Bob's company was changed from Tuff Gong Limited to Tuff Gong International, more appropriate to Bob's world following.

On 1 January the Wailers left Kingston for London on their way to Gabon in West Africa, where the band had been engaged to play for the birthday party of Gabon's leader, President Omar Bongo. It was supposed to be a great moment, the band's first concert on African soil. Instead, Gabon was a disaster. As Diane Jobson put it, 'Gabon is where we found out Don Taylor was a thief.'

Months before, Taylor had been approached by the Gabonais president's two daughters, who wanted the Wailers to play at their father's birthday party. When Bob was informed, he was so happy to have been invited to Africa that he said he'd do the show for nothing. But Taylor told Bob that a $40,000 fee would cover their expenses and be a pittance to the immensely wealthy Bongo family. Bob told Taylor to negotiate the deal.

The Wailers arrived in Gabon on 4 January and stayed two weeks. The group had been expecting to play some shows for the people of Gabon, and were disappointed when the two concerts were held at a small tennis arena for about two thousand of the Gabonais young élite. But they were given a beautiful beach hotel to live in, which was invaded at all hours by young Gabonais. Some of them wanted to know what a Jamaican thought he could tell Africans about Ras Tafari, and Bob held long discussions and 'reasonings' with them on the beach and in his suite until dawn.

The trouble started when it was time for the Wailers to be paid and leave Gabon. There was a minor dispute over the fee for Bob and soul-singer Betty Wright, a client of Don Taylor's who had opened the shows for the Wailers. It was clear that some chicanery was under way, which Taylor blamed on a black American employee of the Bongos named Bobbitt. But before the Wailers left, Bobbitt heard he was being blamed for an internal dispute among the Wailers, and went directly to Bob, asking if there was some problem with the fee of $60,000 that had been paid to Don Taylor.

Taylor's game was up. Having negotiated with the Bongos for

$60,000, Taylor had told Bob the fee was only $40,000, thus netting a quick $20,000 profit for himself on the side. Bob and Diane Jobson had already had suspicions; but this was the first real evidence of his manipulations. Bobbitt also went to President Bongo with the story, and the Wailers' departure was delayed when Bongo called everybody in to clear the air. Don Taylor was exposed, with Bob Marley as his unknowing dupe. Bob was extremely upset, according to Tyrone, that Rastaman had been disgraced in front of an African ruler by someone like Don Taylor. That night, back at the Wailers' hotel, there was a brutal three-hour confrontation between Bob and Don, witnessed by the whole touring party (and even tape-recorded by Neville Garrick), in which Taylor was beaten severely and forced to confess his sins. For years, according to Diane Jobson, Taylor had been getting $15,000 for concert advances and giving Bob only $5,000. Again, Bob would give Taylor $50,000 to send to Family Man in Jamaica, and Taylor would change the money on the black market at triple the rate and give Family Man only the legal rate. Bob had never made any money on tour until 1978, when he first took Diane along to learn the business and keep an eye on Don. Bob told Don he wanted all the stolen money back, and Taylor sobbed that every penny had gone to pay his huge gambling debts. Bob was so enraged that he reacted like a Trench Town gangster. 'At that point,' one witness said, 'Bob almost beat Don Taylor to death.' Tyrone recalls a livid Bob kicking Don Taylor in the head and the testicles. More diplomatic, Diane said Taylor 'got a kick in the ass. He should've gotten two.'

Don Taylor was summarily fired as Bob Marley's manager on 17 January in Gabon. The next day, the Wailers flew back to London to begin recording *Uprising* and try to pick up the pieces. Later, Bob commented to a reporter: 'Don too tricky, yunno? Juggling people, him too tricky. . . . Is better that somebody ask you for something, and get it more, then try trick me fe take it. I'm no fool.'

The *Uprising* sessions produced almost twenty songs, only half of which would appear on the album when it was released the following May, and a change in the Wailers' sound. The horns and rock mannerisms had been disgarded in favour of Africanisms like Junior's Nigerian 'highlife' guitar on 'Could You Be Loved'. Junior and Tyrone were singing male harmonies behind Bob on 'Coming In From The Cold' and 'We And Dem'. The lyrics drew more heavily than ever from scripture, with 'Forever Loving Jah' taken in part from Psalm 1 and the starkly autobiographical 'Redemption Songs', adapting lines from the Joseph story in Genesis. 'Redemption Songs' was a total departure, a deeply personal verse sung to the bright-sounding acoustic strumming

of Bob's Ovation Adamis guitar. Although a band version was recorded and later released, the album version had just Bob and his guitar, the most intimate and plaintive moment of communication that Bob ever allowed himself in a recording. And after the pan-Africanism of the *Survival* era, *Uprising* seemed almost totally personal. 'Bad Card' was in part about Don Taylor as gambler. 'Pimper's Paradise' was Bob's analysis of the girls who flocked to his scene. 'Work' was a classic Wailers counting song that advised black people to work in the sense of Marcus Garvey's proposed independent black economy. 'Real Situation' spoke of a Jamaica again riddled by the violence of an election in which a failed socialist programme was obviously succumbing to an aggressive push by Seaga's free-market forces. 'We And Dem' was Bob's most courageous song, in its seeming frankness about his life as a cancer patient trying to survive a disease for which there is no cure.

The Wailers were by then at such a pitch that even the out-takes of these sessions produced brilliant songs, like 'Stiff-Necked Fools' and 'Give Me Trench Town', as well as the first experiments with a new song about Jamaican politics called 'Slogans'.

By early February Bob was ready for a short break from recording. He went to his house in Miami, and conferred with Danny Sims about his management situation. Bob's contract with Island would expire with *Survival*, and Sims told Bob he could get the Wailers a better deal with Polygram, the international recording conglomerate. Sims recalls that Bob was surrounded by a swarm of amateur music experts trying to run his career, but doing much more harm than good. Bob then went to Kingston, in time to give himself a birthday party on 6 February to which he invited all the children of the Hope Road tribe. Sitting close to his father, little Stevie Marley held Bob's hand while Bob cut the big white-iced carrot cake with thirty-five candles burning bright.

Kingston was turbulent, and Bob felt it was no place for him to be, especially since the scene at Hope Road was the centre of a storm of complaint. It was the era of the 'rub-a-dub' style of disc-jockeying, when sound-system oracles like Papa Michigan and General Smiley savaged the Kingston dances with a steady new throb that pounded like tribal drums. Since Michigan and Smiley's big single 'One Love Jamdown' had been released on 56 Hope Road Records, a Tuff Gong subsidiary, the Tuff Gong sound system blared the song out over its huge loudspeakers day and night. That was more than the neighbourhood could stand. On top of this the house and studio remained *the* hang-out for Bob's hoodlum friends and the Twelve Tribes Rasta element. Articles appeared in the conservative *Gleaner* denouncing Tuff Gong for being dirty and noisy and creating a 'ghetto environment'

in Kingston's best suburb. Hence the lines in 'Bad Card': *I want to disturb my neighbour/Cos I'm feeling so right/I want to turn up my disco/ Blow dem to full watts tonight/In a-rub-a-dub style, in a-rub-a-dub style.*

But Bob tried to keep his personal profile as low as possible in a tense Jamaica that was beginning to undergo the violent rigours of another national election. The flashy silver BMW Bavaria was gone, replaced by a Jeep. 'An *old* Jeep,' he emphasized, 'so nobody will say I'm driving a BMW any more.' Part of the parade around the Tuff Gong complex included the inevitable foreign reporters looking for quotes from Bob on the international reggae movement he was spearheading. But now he had less tolerance for the press, especially an interviewer from Australian television who asked Bob if he was rich.

'When you say rich, wha' you mean?' Bob asked haughtily.

The reporter asked if Bob had many possessions.

'Possessions mek you rich?' Bob sniffed with contempt. 'I nuh 'ave dat type of riches. My riches is *life*.'

The reporter then asked what he would have to do to become a Rasta like Bob. The answer came hard and fast.

'Well, the first thing you have to do is . . . be born again!'

The reporter asked if he would have to be reborn black.

'Do you have a choice? If you have a choice, you better be born black if you have a choice, and if you don't have a choice, come as what God send you.'

In March Bob, Junior Marvin and singer Jacob Miller flew to Brazil in a private jet to plan a series of concerts featuring the Wailers and Miller's Inner Circle band, set to take place after the North American segment of the planned Tuff Gong *Uprising* tour that year. The shows were postponed, but not cancelled, after Jacob Miller's tragic death in a Kingston car-crash on 23 April.

When Bob returned to Miami he received two pieces of news. The first was that his old friend Bucky Marshall, the PNP henchman who had worked on the Peace concert, had been shot dead at a dance in Brooklyn. Bob's sadness was offset by the second piece of news, a formal invitation to attend the Independence ceremonies of the new nation of Zimbabwe on 17 April. The Smith-Muzorewa government, realizing their position was hopeless, had submitted to talks with the Patriotic Front forces. New elections had been called, with the guerrilla factions being allowed to take part. The result was a landslide for Robert Mugabe's Marxist-orientated ZANU party. Bob's invitation was sent at the personal request of Edgar Tekere, the General Secretary of the ZANU party and one of the fiercest warriors for freedom in Zimbabwe. It was a singular honour and a stunning fulfilment of Bob's

prophecy in the song 'Zimbabwe'.

Until two weeks before the event it was assumed that Bob alone was going to Zimbabwe. Then two businessmen from Zimbabwe arrived with another invitation, asking Bob Marley and the Wailers to appear at the ceremony as part of the official celebration programme. Everyone was stunned. Nobody had dreamed that 'Zimbabwe' would go this far. Nobody except Bob, who offered to perform purely for the honour, and to pay all the Wailers' expenses himself.

Three days before the ceremony the Wailers arrived at Salisbury airport. Twenty-one tons of equipment, including the stage, a full 35,000-watt public address system and a twelve-man road crew had to be flown in on a chartered air-freighter. The Wailers were met by Joshua Nkomo, Minister of Home Affairs in the new Mugabe government, as well as the rest of the cabinet, another overpowering gesture of the esteem the new nation felt for Bob Marley.

While the stage was being erected at Rufaro Stadium, ten miles outside Salisbury, the Wailers spent the night at a motel on the outskirts of the city. They talked to many of the former guerrillas who were also billeted there, and accompanied them the next night to Joby's, a nightclub in the heart of Salisbury. Edgar Tekere, sporting twin .9 millimetre pistols on each hip, drove Bob and a few others out to one of the guerrilla camps to visit the troops. Bob remembered the visit with pleasure: 'One night we go to a soldier place and a guerrilla call out to me, and give me a touch of something. *Tell ya bwai* . . . Good herb dem smoke man! Dem tell me they smoke that herb and feel brave. Dem tell me it mek dem . . . *invisible*!'

It was Tekere who made the deepest impression on Bob. The veteran of the wars for African liberation told Bob sternly not to return to Jamaica. When Bob answered that he still had work left to do back in Jamaica, Tekere told him that was foolishness. Tekere told Bob that he was *home* now, an African man who should stay in Africa and become part of the destiny of the continent. 'That was the best invitation you could get,' Bob said later. 'Man who fight for the land tell you to stay. It's your home. Him risk him life, him was fighting. Plenty people shoot after him and him still alive, come tell me stay in Zimbabwe. It's the *best*.'

On the night of the ceremony, the Wailers left for the stadium at 8.30, and slowly made their way behind the stage they had brought with them. Thousands of uniformed schoolchildren were performing gymnastic exercises on the field as the Wailers tuned up. Musical accompaniment was provided by a Scottish pipe band and a choir made up of ZANLA guerrillas. Prince Charles, who was present to lower the

Union Jack for the last time, and Bob Marley were introduced and talked quietly in a corner for a few moments. Bob wouldn't say what they talked about. Then the ceremony of independence began, and the Wailers watched in total awe as the ritual unfolded. Rhodesia had been the last colony in Africa (apart from Namibia, not a colony in the literal sense); now, as Zimbabwe, it became the fiftieth independent state in Africa. The Idependence process, the fruit of a great tree with Marcus Garvey at the roots, which had begun in Ghana in 1957, was now at an end. As the British flag was lowered, the assembled troops took two steps backward. As the red, gold, green and black flag of Zimbabwe was raised, the troops took two steps forward. Twenty-one cannon boomed out a salute as the crowd cheered and jet fighters roared overhead. And then, at ten o'clock, a voice announced, 'Bob Marley and the Wailers!' As the stage lights went on, Junior began shouting, 'Viva Zimbabwe', and the audience roared for Bob Marley. The band lit into 'Zimbabwe', but stopped ten minutes into the show when the riot police set off tear gas outside the stadium to rout a large band of ZANLA guerrillas trying to crash the gate to hear the Wailers. As the tear gas drifted in, the audience started to panic and the I Threes were rushed off the stage and back to the hotel. After a few moments of chaos and brandished AK-47s, the Wailers resumed playing 'War' while the guerrillas marched into the stadium with clenched fists. At ten-thirty Bob called it quits after annoying officials and thrilling the audience by playing twenty minutes longer than planned. They would play their full show the following night. As Bob was coming off stage, he was met by the I Threes, who had returned to the stadium when they heard the danger had passed. 'Now,' Bob joked when he saw them, quoting himself, 'we'll find out who are the *real* revolutionaries.'

The next night at the stadium, under a banner that read 'Welcome to Salisbury, Sun Capital of Africa,' the Wailers played an inspired show for forty thousand Zimbabweans. Dressed in leather, thick locks dripping down his back, Bob slapped and scratched his face as he sang, improvising kinky bongo dance routines and high-stepping in half-time in the instrumental dub sections. It was perhaps the greatest moment in his life. He had helped change the course of African history with his music and the extent of his influence was symbolized in that concert for Zimbabwe.

Yet, even with this triumph, some of the Wailers sensed something was wrong with Bob. He looked ill on the plane back from Africa. In London the eight male Wailers crowded into an elevator for a group photograph by Adrian Boot. The camera caught Bob in his grey tweed jacket and bloated tam, his face gaunt and haggard, a far-away,

distracted gaze veiling his normally piercing eyes.

Uprising, the Wailers' tenth and last album for Island Records, was released in May 1980, initially to a mixed reception. Critics liked the upbeat tracks like 'Work' and 'Could You Be Loved', and were impressed by the dark, folkish power of 'Redemption Songs'. Others, like *Rolling Stone*'s critic, found the album 'pessimistic and broody'. But whereas *Survival* had sold only moderately, *Uprising* was an instant commercial success, helped by the Afro-beat dance groove of 'Could You Be Loved', which Island had released as a single.

Later that month, the Wailers began their epic 'Tuff Gong *Uprising*' tour in Zurich. It was the most arduous series of concerts they ever gave. Playing to more than one million fans in twelve different European countries in only six weeks, they had to perform every night for six nights a week, a different venue in a different city every night, often playing without sleep. The Wailers entourage, travelling by jet and by bus, was now forty strong, and included a Swiss film crew for part of the trip and Alan 'Skill' Cole, back on the road with Bob as a bodyguard and field commander. Skill's return also meant that the Wailers' five-a-side indoor soccer squad (Bob, Skill, Seeco, Gillie the cook and Rasta roadie Naphtali in goal) remained undefeated for the duration of the tour.

For two months the Wailers criss-crossed Europe in their flashy new red, gold and green satin battle-jackets, each musician's name stitched on the chest. The pace was sheer madness. On one afternoon in July they played outdoors for a hundred thousand fans at the Crystal Palace Garden Party. That night they flew to Munich and were stuck all night at the airport when no bus arrived to pick them up. That afternoon, playing with no sleep, the Wailers opened an outdoor show for Fleetwood Mac. They were stunning, and after their set, twenty thousand people left the stadium without bothering to see Fleetwood Mac.

For a long swing through Scandinavia and Germany, the band travelled by bus. A fierce Jamaican-style domino game raged out of control in the back of the bus, while up front the video hummed. One favourite tape was a black-and-white duet on 'Redemption Songs' by Bob and Wire Lindo on acoustic guitars, taped for JBC television earlier in the year. And there was the tape of a Wailers rehearsal for the *Uprising* tour, taped at Tuff Gong studio just before the tour. Looking thin and tired, but singing hard and clear in a dub-wise rehearsal style, Bob was serious, spontaneous and passionate, the dangerous young Rude Boy of 1973 turned into the thoughtful young father of 1980.

Family Man is pictured crammed into the furthest corner of the little studio in an attempt to isolate the resonating boom of his bass. Bob's favourite tape was a Tina Turner spectacular with Sister Turner at her most carnal.

In many ways the German concerts were the strongest of the tour. Bob had a special feeling for Germany, and the Wailers consistently played two-and-a-half-hour sets, reprising all their greatest hits and showcasing the new songs from *Uprising*. In Dortmund, and on many other shows that tour, the I Threes served as opening act, backed by the Wailers. Looking regal in almost formal gowns, the I Threes gave devastating performances. Marcia Griffiths, who had toured in Germany before she joined the Wailers, would address the audience in German after the three had sung her 'Precious World'. 'Good evening and welcome to the Tuff Gong experience,' she would say. 'This is where we bring you the message so that your souls will be uplifted.' Then they would sing Judy's 'Slave Queen', Rita's 'That's The Way Jah Planned It', and Marcia's stirring 'Stepping Out Of Babylon', with Carly Barrett beating his drums as if for his life and Tyrone throwing down bolts of orchestral synthesizer illumination.

Then Family Man would commence a bass dub pattern while Junior began to chant, 'Mar-ley . . . Mar-ley . . . Mar-ley.' Finally, when the cheering had built like a thousand sirens and the tension was tangible, Bob would appear onstage. 'Hail, Rastafari! I-tinually ever faithful, ever pure, Jah live, children . . . And there's a natural mystic flowing in the air . . . *Yeah*!' Almost three hours later, after the second encore, the shows would end with Bob playing 'Redemption Songs' alone on stage, a bantam-weight lone locksman strumming a big red Adamis guitar: '*Old pirates yes they rob I/Sold I to the merchant ships/Minutes after they took I from the bottomless pit/But my hand was made strong/By the hand of the Almighty/We forward in this generation, triumphantly*.' As he sang, first Seeco took up his hand drums, then the rest of the band gradually dropped in and turned 'Redemption Songs' into a song of Bob Marley's identity and worth, and of the sadness that came from living inside his own vision.

After playing for 180,000 Italians in Milan and a hundred thousand in a park in Dublin, the Wailers returned to England for some shows and settled into a flat in the West End. At a gym called Eternity Hall in Fulham, the Wailers five-a-side football squad beat a team from *Record Mirror* 50–36. Bob played with his hair down and scored an even dozen goals. It was Skill Cole, the one-time striker for Santos Brazil, that sent the score flying. A few weeks earlier at Nantes in France a larger Wailers squad had performed well against the French national team.

While in London, Bob was preoccupied with a new song called 'Slogans'. Strumming his guitar, reaching into his experience for new lyrics, he sang it all the time. A tape made in a West End flat with Anglo-reggae singer Delroy Washington and a bunch of girls is the only known recording of one of Bob Marley's final songs about the horror then taking place on the streets of Kingston: *Wipe off the paint and the slogans/All over the street/Confusing the people/While asphalt burns our tired feet/I see demonstration, segregation and riot/False prophets, dictators and traitors/I see boundaries and barriers . . . Can't take your slogans no more/Can't take your slogans no more . . . No more false talk from the hypocrites/No more sweet talk from the pulpit . . . Can't take your slogans no more/Can't take your slogans no more.*

When the European segment of the Tuff Gong *Uprising* tour had wound down, most of the Wailers returned to Jamaica while Bob and his inner circle flew to Miami. With no professional manager at the helm, Bob Marley's business affairs were in turmoil. Don Taylor was suing Bob for a million dollars, and Bob was counter-suing.

Even more ominous was a warning Danny Sims had received. Sims had been called down to Miami to consult with Bob over management and the potential multi-million-dollar offer from Polygram upon expiration of the Island contract. When Bob told Sims that he wanted to return to Jamaica to see his children and take care of business, Sims gave him some bad news. The civil war raging in Kingston had become so hot that an associate of Sims', with links to the CIA, had passed on a warning to Sims that if Bob returned to Jamaica and it even looked as if he might support Manley against Seaga (who was supported by the CIA), then what had happened to Bob and his family in 1976 would, according to Sims, 'look like a fuckin' skirmish'.

Exile, even self-imposed, was a bitter pill for Bob Marley. He did not return to Jamaica during his lifetime. Despite years of Rasta rhetoric about Ethiopian repatriation, he still loved Jamaica and was distraught over the killings in western Kingston. After his old cronies Take-Life and Frowzer, among many others, had been murdered in the streets during the long campaign, Bob summed up his feelings to a reporter in London: 'Yeah mon. Survival. I think what is going on down there, it is a dreadful t'ing, like some mass execution without control or anyt'ing. And Jamaica is a likkle place. Jamaica is sufferin' people who have nothin' else. All dem do is fight. Fe what? Dem nuh fight fe Jah or nothin'. Just *war*! *Foolish t'ing*.'

10 · BERHANE SELASSIE

'Well I know dat, way I figure seh, maybe tings get worse for the better, yunnerstand? They just get . . . worse for the better.' (1980)

Bob Marley's appearance changed drastically during the summer of 1980. At first it wasn't easy for the other Wailers to see, because they were with him every day. But then, Judy Mowatt says, 'We sense the changes in him even though he wouldn't tell anyone that something is wrong. He had lost weight, he wasn't eating much and he wasn't talking much either. Bob was always a jovial person and we realize now that he was very quiet for him, and the bones of his cheek projected a lot. But he's a person like, yunno, something will be wrong with him and he will not say it. He was like a father to us, a man who would not burden anyone with problems.'

In August, a month before the Tuff Gong *Uprising* tour of America was to begin, Bob's deterioration was obvious. Al Anderson recalls, 'We saw him getting thin and not eating as much. We thought he was just tired from too much touring, burnt out like the rest of us.' Most of the Wailers assumed that Bob's old cancer had faded and been held in check by the regular check-ups Bob was supposed to have. In Miami the band was given the tour schedule, beginning in Boston on 16 September, then moving to New York to share the bill with the Commodores for two nights at Madison Square Garden. It was to be a prestige gig in black music. The tour would later intersect with Stevie Wonder, who had just released his first reggae single, 'Master Blaster Jamming', which Bob first heard in Miami with a combination of pleasure and mild shock: '*From the park I hear rhythms/Marley's hot on the box/Tonight there'll be a party/On the corner at the end of the block. . . . Peace has come to Zimbabwe/Third World's right on the one/Now's the time for celebration/Cos we've only just begun.*' It really seemed that Bob –

Stevie Wonder's 'Master Blaster' – could make his mark on America.

Al Anderson first noticed that Bob was in trouble when Chris Blackwell showed up to videotape an acoustic version of 'Redemption Songs'. As they began to play, 'Bob was coughing a lot and his breath rattled. I asked him what's the matter and he said, "Nothing man, me alright, everything cool." After the video session, Bob lay down and looked tired and really sick. I said, "Listen man, what the fuck, I *know* something's wrong with you." He said, "Al, I got a pain in my throat and my head, and it's killing me. It's like somebody's trying to kill me. I feel like I've been poisoned. And something wrong with my voice. I've never felt like this before in my life." '

Despite Bob's frail health, plans continued for the tour. Since *Uprising* had been out for several months and sales had fallen off, Chris Blackwell gave Danny Sims $80,000 and a two-point override to promote the US single, 'Could You Be Loved'. Sims went to work in late August and within two weeks the single was being played on every important black station in America. Some of the Wailers were puzzled by Bob's health. He had supposedly had a complete check-up from his personal doctor just prior to the tour. The musicians were told that Bob was okay, just tired. Rumours began to circulate that Bob was maintaining the pace by 'free-basing' cocaine, smoking pure cocaine base freed of waste alcaloids by a simple chemical process. A lot of accusation and denial flew back and forth about Bob's use of cocaine. The only thing definite was that Bob wasn't talking about it.

On 1 September Bob served as Grand Marshal of the annual West Indian Carnival parade held on Labor Day in Brooklyn. Two weeks later the Wailers flew to Boston, where the American tour was due to begin on 16 September.

The I Threes were supposed to open the show in Boston, just as they had during the European shows, but at the last minute Bob changed his mind and played the 'old' show, starting with 'Natural Mystic' and running through the Wailers' songbook before hitting the new songs from *Uprising* near the end of the performance, which seemed abnormally subdued for the Wailers. On the following day they bussed south to Providence, where a tired-sounding, husky-voiced Bob Marley made the rounds of the radio stations before a long soundcheck at the Providence Civic Center, where another subdued set was played. On 18 September, they arrived in New York, where Bob was planning to do two days of interviews and visit radio stations prior to the two-night stand at Madison Square Garden, where they would appear with the Commodores.

From the moment they arrived in New York, the band knew

something was wrong. The Wailers had been travelling together for years sharing the same hotels. The I Threes' room had always been on the same floor as Bob's so that they could rehearse new routines and Rita could iron Bob's clothes before the show. But in New York, Bob was deliberately isolated from the rest of the band for the first time. While most of them were assigned rooms at the Gramercy Park Hotel, Bob and the inner circle checked into the Essex House on Central Park South, almost forty blocks away from the rest of the band. When the musicians protested (Bob was using Island Records' six-door stretch limo, but for the musicians it was a five-dollar cab ride between hotels) they were told that Skill wanted the Skip away from the rest of the tour so he could concentrate on publicity and then get some rest.

But Bob's suite at the Essex House was a circus, day and night, crowded with friends, musicians, dope-dealers, reporters, photographers, free-loaders and hangers-on talking loud, guzzling drinks and ordering room service. Bob was tired and spent a lot of time lying on the big bed, observing the flickering skyscrapers of New York through the floor-to-ceiling windows of the suite. It seemed like every hustler in New York wanted something from Bob. One young Jamaican trooped in with lights and a video camera, asking Bob to do a couple of tunes for the reggae programme he had on a local cable channel. Bob was exhausted, but he asked for his guitar and sang 'Redemption Songs' in a weak voice flat on his back while the tape rolled.

The confusion and chaos that was building around Bob Marley increased the next day, Friday, 19 September, the Wailers' opening night at the Garden. That afternoon, after fortifying himself with ginseng tea and lots of herb, Bob visited radio stations and put in an appearance at the Jamaican Progressive League before leaving for the soundcheck at the big arena on 34th Street. When the Wailers arrived the road crew was still building the Commodores' stage set on which the Wailers would play. Although the two groups were equally billed, the Wailers were opening both shows, swallowing a little pride to capture a new audience for the band's message. So the soundcheck was delayed, then postponed, then cancelled. When Bob Marley and the Wailers took the stage that night, lively red, green and gold characters on a gaudy red and white stage that looked like the interior of a Cadillac, the sound was abysmal, and the first numbers were ruined until engineer Errol Brown could mix the levels the way Bob wanted them. Dressed in his usual denim jacket, jeans and construction boots, Bob gave a bravura show, throwing his hair until it seemed a whirlpool around his face. Twenty thousand New Yorkers cheered his amazing magical presence as he once again cast his spell: '*There's a natural mystic blowing*

through the air/If you listen carefully now you will hear/This could be the first trumpet/Might as well be the last/Many more will have to suffer/Many more will have to die . . .'

The following day Bob was totally beat. He stayed in the hotel with his courtiers. Lying on his bed, he talked with journalists and friends; when an aide brought in a huge bundle of cash, the receipts from the previous night's show, Bob waved the package off as if it contained something unworthy of consideration. Part of the intrigue swirling around Bob in New York had to do with his lack of a manager and even a record label. He had lately become dissatisfied with Island, which he considered a white rock label unable to channel the Wailers' music toward the black audience for which he was aiming. That night at Madison Square Garden the president of Polygram came backstage offering according to Danny Sims, a ten-million-dollar label deal with Tuff Gong International. The deal was to have involved an immediate three-million-dollar advance to Bob, with the rest to be paid out over the course of five albums, as well as the rights to other Jamaican artists in the Tuff Gong stable like the I Threes, the Melody Makers, Freddie MacGregor, Burning Spear, Junior Tucker, Nadine Sutherland and others.

Early on Sunday morning, Rita called her husband to see if he wanted to go to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church with her. Bob told her he didn't feel well because he had got to bed late after the final New York concert.

Later that morning, Bob put on a warm-up suit and went out to run in Central Park with Skill and a few others, including Dr Frazier. The group had almost reached the reservoir track when Bob shouted out in panic. 'Alan! Alan!' Skill Cole turned and Bob collapsed into his arms. Bob remained conscious, terrified. His body felt 'frozen', and his neck was immobile. He could hardly move at all. His friends carried Bob back to the hotel, and after a couple of hours the seizure seemed to pass, and Bob could walk again.

Hours later, someone called Rita at the Wailers' hotel and told her what had happened. She immediately went to Bob's suite at the Essex House, where she found a crowd of people smoking in the living-room while Bob tried to rest in the bedroom. Bob told her that he was feeling better and would see her later that night at a new reggae club in lower Manhattan called Negril. But when the I Threes arrived at the club that night, they were told that Bob had fallen ill at the club and had just left with Skill Cole in the limo, bound for the hotel.

The next morning, Monday, the Wailers were scheduled to fly to Pittsburg to continue the tour. Rita called for Bob to pick him up for

the ride to the airport, but Bob told her he wasn't making the flight. He was vague with her, saying he had some business, an interview to do. So the band flew on to Pittsburg; everyone now knew about Bob's collapse. As Al Anderson says, 'The band knew there was a big, big problem.'

Bob didn't make the flight to Pittsburg because Dr Frazier had taken him to a neurologist, whose diagnosis came fast and came very bad. Bob had a large cancerous brain tumour. The collapse in Central Park had been a stroke. The neurologist ventured that Bob had only between two and three weeks left to live. Bob was stunned, speechless. Carl Frazier asked was there a chance of another diagnosis. He was shown the irrefutable results of the X-rays and brain-scans.

An immediate decision had to be made on the tour. Marley's doctors demanded the rest of the dates be cancelled at once. But Bob wanted to go on to Pittsburg. He muttered something about knowing what was going on and wanting to get another opinion from another doctor.

That afternoon, Rita called Bob's suite from Pittsburg, where the Wailers were waiting for him. One of Bob's publicists answered the phone and told Rita that Bob had suffered a stroke. Rita assumed that the tour was cancelled but was told no, that Bob was insisting on coming to Pittsburg. Hearing this, Rita burst into a rage. 'If anything happens to Bob,' she shouted, 'somebody's gonna *feel* it.' Later she lay down to rest, and had a vision of Bob wearing hospital clothes, with no hair, talking to her from the other side of a fence.

Bob and the rest of his group arrived in Pittsburg that night, and Rita went to see him as soon as he got to their hotel. Bob looked dazed and hardly seemed to recognize anybody. He looked so different that Rita blew up and tried to stop the tour right there. She called Cedella in Miami and told her Bob was too sick to play but was being pushed by his associates to play that night. But Bob was adamant, and the Wailers played their last concert ever the next night at the Stanley Theater, with the feeling that if Bob was going to die anyway, he might as well die on tour the way he wanted. Such was the sense of desperation felt by all the Wailers.

On the afternoon before that final show, there was a soundcheck at the theatre late in the afternoon. Bob brought the whole band on stage and, without saying a word, started to sing the old '*I got to keep on moving*' chorus from 'Rude Boy', a classic Wailers riff that Bob sang over and over and over for forty-five minutes until the I Threes were in tears and the rest of the band got upset and wanted to leave the stage. But everyone understood. It was, Judy Mowatt said later, Bob's way of saying goodbye to the Wailers when he had them all together one last time.

That night was magnificent. The show burnt with the fury of a dying man's eyes. Bob came out without an introduction and shouted into his microphone: '*Yeah! Greetings* in the name of His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I, Jah, Rastafari, who liveth and reigneth with I and I I-tinually, ever faithful, ever sure. They say that experience teaches wisdom, but there's a natural mystic blowing through the air. . . .' And they launched into a fast, ninety-minute version of their show, the Barrett brothers rushing the beat so that Bob wouldn't get too tired. Although Bob's voice sounded a little raspy on 'Natural Mystic', it improved as the band charged into 'Positive Vibration', 'Burnin' And Lootin' ', 'Them Belly Full', 'Heathen' and a medley of 'Running Away' and 'Crazy Baldheads'. Bob's dance was a little less spry than usual, but other than that the Wailers played like any other night where the band wanted to really throw it down onstage. Still moving fast, Bob sang hard on 'War', 'No More Trouble', 'Zimbabwe', 'Zion Train', 'No Woman No Cry' and the long finale of 'Jamming' and 'Exodus'.

After a few minutes of pandemonium, the Wailers came back for the encores. Bob performed 'Redemption Songs' alone with his guitar, and offstage many of the touring party cried in the wings at the poignancy of the moment. They finished the set with 'Coming In From the Cold' and 'Could You Be Loved' and left the stage again. But Bob wanted to play more, so they came back and did 'Is This Love' and 'Work'. As Bob sang the numerical verses – '*Five days to go working for the next day/Four days to go* . . .' the rest of the band realized the show was over at last. Bob was literally counting the Wailers down to the end. 'Work' was the last song he ever performed.

After the show, Rita called Danny Sims and threatened to 'make war' if the tour were not stopped. Sims asked her what she wanted to do, and Rita said she would take Bob home to his mother in Miami and find the best doctors for him. So the tour was stopped. Skill Cole called all the Wailers to Family Man's room. Choked by his own words, Skill gravely cleared his voice and spoke out of his bushy black beard. 'Well I-ya . . . it's like this . . . it's a thing where Bob . . . isn't physically capable . . . of continuing working.' Nobody could speak. The Tuff Gong *Uprising* tour was cancelled on 23 September 1980. The 'official' position was that Bob was suffering from exhaustion.

Bob was flown to Miami the next day in a state of devastation. A year's worth of planning, touring and recording commitments had gone for nothing. Bob didn't believe he was really a dying man, but he knew his career was over. It was a terrible moment for him. He underwent tests at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, where his foot had been operated on, but the doctors decided to send him back to New York for further

tests at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Institute. Bob flew to New York supported by Cindy Breakspeare, Skill and Dr Frazier, who checked Bob into Sloan-Kettering as soon as they could. Bob had hoped his stay at the famous cancer centre could be kept secret, but Jamaica's traditional ties to nursing and hospital work undid him. When Bob's test results came in on 7 October, he was found to have cancer in his lungs and stomach as well as a malignant brain tumour. The Sloan-Kettering doctors told Bob that at best he had perhaps four to five weeks to live, and started radiation therapy in an attempt to reduce the growth of the tumour on Bob's brain. On 8 October, the day after the results of the tests came in, the black-oriented radio station WLIB broadcast the news that Bob Marley was a cancer patient at Sloan-Kettering. That same afternoon, Bob left the hospital and checked into the Wellington Hotel on 56th Street so he could maintain his privacy while continuing the therapy at the hospital as an out-patient. Initially, he responded to the radiation. He felt strong enough to watch his friend Mohammed Ali's last fight against heavyweight champion Larry Holmes. Friends took him to a concert by the British rock group Queen, and one Sunday afternoon he went out to play soccer with Skill Cole. But he was unable to run and tackle with his usual fervour, and he soon limped off to the sidelines to watch.

Lee Jaffe found Bob a few days later, at Danny Sims' house on Fifth Avenue and 103rd Street. Even with lung cancer, Bob was smoking a spliff with his hangers-on while around him controversy raged. Until the cancer story broke in the press, some of the less scrupulous elements in Bob's entourage wanted Sims to keep Bob's illness a secret from Polygram Records so they could take the huge advance and run. Sims refused, but the point became moot when Bob's cancer became public knowledge and the offer was withdrawn. There was also arguing over Bob's treatment. Some wanted him to stay at Sloan-Kettering, while others like Sims and Jaffe wanted Bob to be put on the controversial non- toxic and dietary treatments that were generally disdained by the mainstream cancer establishment. Sims wanted Bob to go to the Mexican clinic where Steve McQueen was then being treated, but didn't want to be the one to take the responsibility of sending him. Later, Lee Jaffe was appalled to find Bob living in a squalid two-room suite at the Wellington with no light and hardly any air, the atmosphere filled with smoke from his cronies' spliffs and cigarettes. Bob looked tired and very sick. One weekend, Lee took Bob up to his country place in upstate New York so Bob could get some fresh air. Bob was quiet but optimistic; he played new songs, but Lee noticed that it was getting harder for Bob to hold his guitar.

Back in New York, Bob suffered a setback. A mini-stroke left him barely able to stand, and the Sloan-Kettering doctors began chemotherapy. Within a week Bob had lost twenty-five pounds and his hair had begun to fall out. One afternoon at the Wellington, Bob's scalp was burning so much from the chemotherapy that he began literally to pull his dreadlocks out of his head. A few minutes later he asked for scissors so that he could cut the rest off himself. When Lee walked in and saw him, he made a remark about Bob looking like a Rude Boy again. 'You're not easy,' Bob replied with a small laugh.

As Bob lost more weight and began to look deathly ill, his family pressured him to be baptised in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Actually, Bob's mother (who herself had been baptised in St Ann with Bob *in utero*) had been trying to get Bob baptised within the EOC for years but he had always said to her in putting it off, 'I baptised by *fire*.' There had also been the problem of the Twelve Tribes, which looked upon the EOC as a rival organization. But now, fearing for his life, Bob agreed to baptism as a favour to his mother, thinking he had only another week or two to live. So he was baptised at the Wellington Hotel, watched by a tearful Rita and their children as Abouna Yesehaq, Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Western Hemisphere, performed the ceremony. Bob was christened Berhane Selassie, 'Light of the Holy Trinity'. After the ceremony, Bob took his wife and children in his arms and wept.

Right after that, Bob began to die. The chemotherapy was having little effect other than making him constantly nauseous. The brain tumour had paralysed him from the waist down so that he was unable to walk. He was passive and confused, not knowing what to do, and his friends were frightened because he looked so bad. He was slipping out of their hands.

A couple of weeks earlier, Bob's doctor had found out that Dr Joseph Issels, a German specialist in non-toxic cancer treatment, would be addressing a cancer seminar in New York. Issels' name had been frequently mentioned to those around Bob as the one man who might be able to save him. Although blacklisted by the American Cancer Society as a quack, and *persona non grata* to Bob's New York doctors, Issels had a solid reputation within the holistic medical community. Said by some to be thirty years ahead of his time, Issels specialized in cancer patients who had been given up by their physicians. His treatments included altered diet, hyperthermia (heat treatment), injections of drugs some considered experimental, and a general holistic philosophy that called for an almost psychological transference, or identification, of patient with doctor. Although there were shadows in Dr Issels' past (he had

been an officer in the German SS during the Second World War, had served a jail term for manslaughter, and had lost a famous patient, the British Olympian Lillian Board, while she was under his care), Issels' clinic in Bad Wiesse, West Germany, treated roughly fifty cancer outpatients per day.

Bob was in such agony that something had to be done. Dr Frazier and Skill tried to speak to Issels at the cancer seminar, but failed because it was closed to the public and security was tight. Later they managed to penetrate the question-and-answer session by almost beating down the door. Frazier asked Issels whether he had ever treated melanoma, and Issels replied that he had, but that it was usually too difficult to cure. Before they were able to speak with him about Bob, the session was over and Issels had slipped out. Later they tracked him down at another lecture he was giving, and persuaded an aide to give them Issels' personal telephone number in Germany.

Back at the hotel, Bob was going downhill. He was having difficulty in eating and breathing, and it seemed to those taking care of him that chemotherapy was itself killing Bob. Dr Frazier called Issels in Germany, and arrangements were made to receive Bob as a patient at Issels' clinic, Sunshine House. Bob's clothes were hastily packed and a four-car caravan organized to take Bob to the airport. Bob rode in Roberta Flack's limousine, and flew to London aboard the Concorde because it was faster, accompanied by Skill, Dr Frazier and a friend called Bird who was cooking for Bob. The friends Bob left in New York wondered if they would ever see him again.

Bob arrived at the clinic in the Bavarian Alps on 9 November, unable to walk without support and expecting to die within days. But within hours, the charismatic, white-haired Issels had captured Bob's complete faith and trust, and managed to stabilize some of his symptoms. After an initial diagnosis had confirmed the brain tumour as well as cancer in the lungs and stomach, Bob was put on a regimen that included blood transfusions, hyperthermia and injections of an anti-cancer agent called THX, the use of which was illegal in the United States. Slowly, Bob began to regain a bit of his strength, and a bit of hope.

To the outside world, Bob had disappeared. The Wailers and Tuff Gong refused to admit publicly that Bob was suffering from cancer. Before Bob had left for New York, Chris Blackwell (who Bob was privately referring to as 'Chris Whitehell') had taped a statement by Bob that was later issued to radio stations: 'Hail Rasta! Ya t'ink anyt'ing can raas kill me? I understand that writers and people in the press are very interested and concerned about my health. I want to say thank you

for your interest and that I'll be all right and I'll be back on the road again in 1981 – really, performing for the fans we love. Beautiful yunno, it's Bob talkin' to ya, have no doubt, seen? Good.' In New York, Bob's publicist continued to insist that Bob was being treated for 'severe fatigue' while in London Rita denied Bob was ill in a radio interview. She said that he had gone to the Shashamani farm in Ethiopia to rest for a spell. But on 25 November the London papers broke the story that Bob was at the Issels clinic, and the ruse was dropped. Nothing was heard from the clinic at Bad Wiesse for another three months.

11 · NINE MILES

Why do you look so sad and forsaken?/When one door is closed/Don't you know another is open? (from 'Coming In From The Cold')

A month after Bob Marley arrived in Germany, instead of dying, as predicted, he began to fall into a routine. He stayed in a ground-floor flat in an old *gasthaus* with his mother and whichever friends were visiting. Strictly forbidden to smoke or drink even a little wine, he would walk with support down the hill to Issels' clinic for hyperthermia treatments twice a day. At these 'heat sessions' intense beams of ultra-violet heat were aimed at Bob's tumours (five in all had been diagnosed) in order to weaken the malignant cells so that they would respond to the drugs Dr Issels had prescribed. The heat sessions were an ordeal for Bob, one which he bore with a silent, stoic courage. As Issels' patient, Rita says, 'He handed himself over, innocently. From that time on, Bob was led.'

In February 1981, the Wailers family gathered at Bad Wiesse to celebrate Bob's thirty-sixth birthday. The whole band was there except for Family Man and Carly Barrett. Bob was in good spirits and in better shape than anyone expected. He was able to kick a ball around in the clinic's gym and was encouraged to take walks of up to an hour along the mountain roads and paths. Cedella Booker and Diane Jobson had gone to Germany for the purpose of bringing Bob back to Miami if his condition was stable, but the idea was overruled by Drs Issels and Frazier. Bob was in no condition to travel and continued to lose weight. But his hair started to grow back – 'he looked just like he did when he was a little boy,' Cedella says – and his face was bright and handsome again. Still, Diane was frightened by Bob's thinness and blank moods. His diet had been restricted to organically grown food, and since it was winter in Germany nothing much was available locally. Bob sorely

missed his roast yam and other Jamaican vegetables; the boxes of food Diane had sent from Jamaica and Florida had been intercepted by the clinic staff. Bob's weight had dropped below seven stone, and Diane insisted the Issels treatment was 'breaking down Bob's physical structure'. She pleaded again with Bob's doctors to let her take him to the Mexican hospital where Steve McQueen was in treatment. Again, she was refused. Bob maintained his faith in Issels.

In March a writer and photographer from the *Daily Mail* showed up at the clinic to do a story on Bob. Diane Jobson was angry that Issels, who had invited the newspaper, was seeking publicity through Bob. Bob was photographed wearing a woollen cap and his Wailers jacket, his face child-like but for the moustache and beard. With the reporter, Bob was frank as ever. He was quoted as saying, 'Like so many other patients who have come here, I was given up by the doctors to die. Now I *know* I can live. I have proved it.'

Asked if his experience had changed him, Bob said 'Yes, of course. I've gone inside myself more. I have had time to explore my beliefs, and I am the stronger because of it.'

As for Issels, Bob was quoted: 'I believe he is the best doctor a man could have. I have faith in him. He is of wide understanding. He gives me the strength to live.'

The interview in the *Daily Mail* received wide attention, and revived hope that Bob might regain his health. Several music magazines published reports that Bob would be back in Jamaica, working on new music, by June. But Bob was undoubtedly confined to the slow and lonely walks between his flat and the clinic. One day when Bob and Diane were walking home slowly along the quiet lane, a little German girl stepped out of a gate and offered Bob a bunch of spring flowers. As Diane began to cry, in spite of herself, Bob murmured that he felt surrounded by love.

One night Dr Issels came to the flat to chat with Bob, and Cedella, Diane, Neville Garrick and Al Anderson, who were also there. A bottle of wine was opened for the occasion, although Bob couldn't drink. Issels told them a story about a German acquaintance who had advised Issels not to treat Bob, saying that Marley was the most dangerous black man in the world. During the conversation Bob played tapes of *Uprising*. Suddenly, for the first time in months, Bob began to sing along with the music, '*Weee can make it work.*' He looked straight at Issels as he sang. When the song ended, Issels nodded in agreement. 'We will,' he said, 'we will.'

Back in Jamaica, there was great speculation over Bob's health. A rumour spread through the Kingston music scene that Chris Blackwell

had said, 'If Bob dies, reggae *mosh*.' Meaning that reggae music might be unable to survive after Bob. There were also rumours that Bob had died, fuelled by the closing of the Tuff Gong studio for several weeks and the firing of Tuff Gong's marketing director, Tommy Cowon. Every Rasta seemed to have his own diagnosis of the reason for Bob's illness, complicated theories involving the story of Samson and Delilah and the Book of Judges. Not long before his end, the new Jamaican government under Edward Seaga awarded Bob Marley the Jamaican Order of Merit. The award was accepted by Bob's oldest son, Ziggy, and it allowed his father the title of the Hon. Robert Nesta Marley, OM.

Cedella Booker noticed her son become weaker again at the beginning of April. Day after day he lay in bed, saying he was too weak to walk to the clinic. When he refused to eat or drink water she complained, and Bob replied, 'Mamma, it's not you feelin' the pain yunno, it's me. I know how I feel, and I can't eat.' As much as possible, he would keep silent. In the evening he read the Bible with Cedella or just meditated, while Cedella sang to him: '*I know Jah Jah will find a way. . . .*' By the middle of the month, Bob was too weak to read, and friends had to read the Bible to him. He sometimes felt the injections he was given were poison, and in bad moments thought they were trying to kill him. Early in April, Dr Issels went on holiday, leaving Bob to be cared for by his staff. Again Diane Jobson protested. How could Issels go on vacation? Bob was down to five stone in weight; he could no longer hold his guitar. To make matters worse, other Wailers were calling Bob from Jamaica, trying to collect money owed to them. There were rumours among the band that Bob was on his deathbed but was refusing to make out a will. The multi-million-dollar Tuff Gong empire was at stake, with Rita as sole heir if Bob died without a will. At one point, Bob sent word to Don Taylor that he wanted to see him, but Taylor didn't come.

Late in April an intestinal operation was performed on Bob to alleviate the intense pain that had developed in Bob's bowel. Two weeks later, on 3 May, Dr Issels examined Bob Marley, and gave up. Issels told Diane and Cedella that Bob had two weeks to live at most, and if they wanted to get him home he would have to leave within a week or Bob wouldn't even be able to survive the flight. Diane went in to see Bob to break the news gently. 'Bob,' she said, 'Dr Issels says you can go home now. He says you can continue the treatment from home.'

Bob had been gazing out the window. Now he turned to face Diane and kissed his teeth bitterly. 'Dr Issels is a madman,' he said softly.

Diane chartered a plane to fly Bob to Miami. They arrived at midday

on Saturday, 9 May, and immediately checked Bob into Cedars of Lebanon. The hospital staff examined Bob and said they could do nothing for him but keep him comfortable.

On Monday morning Bob's doctors told Rita, who was sitting with Bob, that Bob was slipping and that it would only be a matter of hours. Rita shook Bob awake, crying for him not to leave her. She started to sing a hymn, 'God Will Take Care of You', but stopped when Bob seemed not to be listening. But then Bob said to her, 'Keep singing, man, keep singing.' Again, Rita begged him not to leave her, and he said he wasn't really going anywhere, that he was just going to prepare a place for himself in the hills. Then his breathing became very shallow, and Rita shook him a little more and blew on his face. Then she called Cedella, who was at home, and told her she better come to the hospital.

By the time Cedella got to the hospital, Bob had revived a little. He said he felt positive and stronger. His wife and mother began to pray aloud, and Bob told them to pray for everyone else, but not for him. Then he spoke to his two sons, Ziggy and Stevie, saying goodbye and telling them what he wanted them to do.

At 11.30 am, Cedella Booker was praying in tears at Bob's bedside. Suddenly Bob said, 'Don't cry for me mamma. I'm gonna be all right.' Cedella answered that she wasn't crying for him, but was crying to God. Bob said, 'Oh.' A few minutes later he asked Cedella for some water, which he drank to the last drop. Cedella thanked him for taking the drink. Some nurses arrived to take an X-ray and Cedella helped them move Bob on to his side. He complained that he had spent the last six months with needles sticking out of his body. Then he lay back and said he wanted to sleep. He stretched out his hand to Cedella and beckoned, saying, 'Come closer, come nearer.' Then his eyes rolled back and he lost consciousness and began to snore until a nurse put an oxygen mask over his face to help him breathe. Cedella left the room and a few minutes later, the doctor came out and told them Bob was gone. Cedella and Diane went into his room. He looked quiet and peaceful for the first time in months. A nurse turned to Cedella and said, 'I'm sorry, ma'am.'

At 11.45 on that same Monday morning, 11 May 1981, Neville Garrick was working in his studio off Hope Road, listening to reggae songs on his cassette-player, when the sky became dark and he and his wife heard three loud thunder-claps and saw a bolt of lightning. Garrick's wife said, 'Umm, I don't like that.'

At Judy Mowatt's house two miles away, the telephone rang, and when Judy answered it a friend in Miami told her that Bob was dead. Judy hadn't even known that Bob was in Miami. 'And at the same

time,' she said, 'there was a great thunder, just as Marcy [Marcia Griffiths] drove up. It was broad daylight, and rain didn't start to fall, but there was this great huge thunder in the heavens and a flash of lightning that came through the house. It came through the window and lodged for a second right on Bob's picture . . . like the heavens really responded to a great force being taken away from the physical plane of the earth.'

Half an hour later, the JBC announced that Bob Marley had died in Miami, and the entire Jamaican nation went into deep mourning.

The Barrett brothers were working at the Tuff Gong studio when the bulletin about Bob's death came over the radio. Knowing that Bob had died without a will and that all Bob's possessions were likely to go to Rita and the children, the Barretts were fearful that a delegation from the Twelve Tribes would try to assert a physical claim on the property, which some members felt had been verbally willed by Bob to the organization. The brothers immediately locked up the studio and closed down the whole compound, leaving the place intact until a decision could be made as to who were Bob's legal heirs.

As the news of Bob's death flashed round the world, many people were caught by surprise. The obituaries showered Bob with praise, from *The Times* in London to the popular magazine *Spear* in Africa. Reuters quoted a London spokesman for Island Records who estimated that the Wailers' world-wide sales of albums exceeded $190 million.

A few days later Bob appeared to his daughter Cedella in a dream. He asked her to tell her uncle, Anthony Booker, to stop telling people that he was dead. 'Every time dem call 'pon the phone,' the little girl reported Bob as saying, 'him tell people seh me dead, and me nuh dead!'

On the Thursday following his death a memorial service was held for Bob Marley at his house on Vista Lane in Miami. A large Ethiopian banner flew from the roof of the big yellow house while in the backyard a line of hand drummers kept up a steady *akete* tattoo, passing the chalice among themselves. Inside the house floral arrangements bedecked every flat surface, and Cedella and Rita stood in the doorway receiving a day-long procession of guests – many of the Wailers, Chris Blackwell, Don Taylor, Danny Sims and dozens of other old friends, employees and strangers who said they were just fans. In the main hall of the house Bob's body was laid out in a bronze casket, open from the waist up. Bob's long locks, which had been saved, were restored to his head under a knitted Ethiopian crown. Bob's face was composed and waxen from the embalming process. His body had shrunk from weight loss and folds of skin hung over his crossed hands. The fingers of his

right hand rested on a Bible open at Psalm 23, while his left hand rested on his old guitar, which Diane had placed in the coffin. The body was dressed in his favourite denim jacket.

Around the coffin, Bob's family and friends held a traditional Jamaican wake. Some people stood facing Bob, speaking loudly to the body. Others offered religious testimony or anecdotes about how contact with Bob Marley had changed their lives. Before the short religious service, Cedella Booker, her face swollen with anguish, sang 'Redemption Songs' while someone played the organ. Outside, the drummers continued their stark tribal vigil.

Bob Marley finally returned to the Jamaica whose violent politics had made him an exile on Tuesday, 19 May, two days before the state funeral. As the coffin was being unloaded from the plane which had flown it home, a *Gleaner* photographer was pushed around by Rita and others after he tried to take some pictures of the arrival. The following day, the body lay in state at the National Arena, where thousands of Jamaicans queued to view Bob Marley one last time. There was a carnival atmosphere outside the arena; vendors were selling food and every manner of Marley bauble, and when the surging crowds broke through their own lines, the police set off waves of tear gas to try to beat them back. Before the day was over, forty thousand Jamaicans had filed past the coffin covered by a Jamaican flag and guarded by uniformed police and members of the Twelve Tribes. When the viewing ceased, the coffin was taken to a funeral home for the night.

The first funeral observances were held for Bob Marley early the next morning, when the coffin was driven to the Jamaican headquarters of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on Maxfield Avenue, in the heart of the old Kingston slums. As a dozen foreign film crews set up their cameras and lights directly in front of the altar, blocking the mourners' view, priests in ornate red, gold and silver vestments chanted prayers in Amharic and Geez, waving frankincense in gold censers. After the church service, the motorcade containing the coffin headed for the National Arena, detouring so the hearse could pass 56 Hope Road one final time in a gesture of farewell.

By the time the motorcade reached the National Arena, the crowd in the building far exceeded its twelve thousand seating capacity. The coffin was placed on the stage and again covered with the Jamaican flag. The backstage was draped in Ethiopian colours with a banner reading 'The Hon. Robert Nesta Marley OM' hung over the top. A bright neon sign flashed the word 'Joseph', Bob's Twelve Tribes name. There were portraits of Bob, Marcus Garvey and Haile Selassie, and from the

balconies hung black banners proclaiming 'The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death' and 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'

At 10 am, there was a musical 'presentation' by the Wailers (minus Tyrone Downie who was too overcome with grief to go to the arena; instead he watched the funeral on television). First Cedella Booker, her daughter Pearl Livingston and a friend named Ora sang a song Cedella had written called 'Hail'. Then the I Threes came on stage in long gowns and scarves, faces puffy from weeping. Backed by the Wailers, they sang 'Rastaman Chant' and 'Natural Mystic', while Bob's sons Ziggy and Stevie danced on stage with some of their father's patented moves.

The funeral service itself began at eleven, presided over by Archbishop Yesehaq, who had baptised Bob in New York the previous year, and a chanting line of Ethiopian Orthodox priests wearing ornate Coptic crosses. Rita, Cedella and Bob's children watched from seats in the second row. After Governor-General Florizel Glasspole and Opposition Leader Michael Manley each read their lessons, there was a snag in the service. Skill Cole, dressed in pure white and a red, green and gold tam, stepped up to the lectern to read a scriptural passage chosen for him by the priests, but he boldly deviated from this choice, and called out greetings to the Twelve Tribes of Israel, whose members felt left out of the ceremonies in favour of the EOC. He was greeted by loud applause and shouts of '*Jah Rastafari!*' A priest stepped up to correct Skill, but the tall footballer shouldered him aside, the rest of the priests clucking in disapproval. Skill then read a passage from Isaiah: '. . . the righteous is taken away from the evil to come,' and told the congregation his lesson had been different from the one in Psalms that had been assigned to him. The Archbishop followed Skill with Matthew 5: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.'

After the mourners stood for the Lord's Prayer, the prime minister gave his 'remembrance,' an eloquent tribute from a man who was professionally and politically Bob Marley's opposite, and whose minions may once have tried to kill him. In his eulogy, Seaga said of Bob: 'His voice was an omnipresent cry in our electronic world, his sharp features, majestic locks, and prancing style a vivid etching on the landscape of our minds. . . . Most people do not command recollection. Bob Marley was never seen. He was an experience which left an indelible, mystical imprint with each encounter. Such a man cannot be erased from the mind. He is part of the collective consciousness of

the nation.' Seaga then announced that a statue of Bob would be commissioned for the park.

After the service, Bob's coffin was carried out of the arena on the shoulders of Twelve Tribes members. Archbishop Yesehaq reassured the huge crowd 'He is not dead, but only resting.' The cortège, making the fifty-five-mile trip to Bob's burial site at Nine Miles, was joined by dozens of rented buses and cars containing journalists, Twelve Tribes members, fans and friends. It drove past streets and sights familiar to Bob Marley, down Tom Redcam Avenue and South Camp Road to Marcus Garvey Drive skirting Trench Town. The crowds were thick in Six Miles and Spanish Town, and as the long line of cars snaked into the deep country the roadsides were filled with black people gathered in solid walls and perched in houses and trees, waving flags and banners, pictures and paintings of Bob, palm fronds, tree branches and umbrellas. The people from the interior had come to line the roads to say good-bye. The hearse carrying the coffin began to have engine trouble in Bog Walk, and at a place called Cotton Tree along the Ewarton Road, it broke down. The cortège was delayed for fifteen minutes until the coffin was transferred to a van. The cars wound slowly through Mount Rosser, Moneague, Claremont, Bamboo, Brown's Town, Alexandria, Alva, Calderwood, Stepney, and on into Nine Miles. After five hours of weaving through the hot green hills of the parishes, Bob Marley's body was carried up the hill on which he was born, now choked by thousands of Jamaicans milling about, and placed in a small plain white cement mausoleum that had been built next to the tiny house Omeriah had built for his daughter and baby grandson thirty-six years earlier. Over the mausoleum grew a large pear tree, laden with fruit. Edward Seaga was already there, surrounded by security. Archbishop Yesehaq was there too, trying to administer the last rites of the Church as pure Jamaican chaos swirled about him in a bewildering array of colour and emotion. Over a loudspeaker, a voice announced: 'Bob Marley, the king of reggae, has chosen to come here to rest.' Rita and Cedella sang, '*Angels of mercy, angels of light, Singing to welcome the pilgrim of the night*' as the sun danced in and out of clouds and then behind the mountain on which Bob's tomb was perched, pitching the bishop's sermon into a cooling shade. As the words echoed out over the hills, the vault was sealed three times. There had been talk in Rasta circles of an attempt to steal the gold ring of Haile Selassie, which was being interred with Bob, so that a living Rasta might be anointed with the ring's power. The first seal was a red metal plate with a gold Star of David, the second a steel grille that was bolted on, and cement, covering the grille, was the third. The formal interment over,

thousands of people trooped down the hillside, mingling with thousands heading uphill for a look.

Much later, as darkness was falling, the crowd thinned out and the smell of cook fires took over Nine Miles. All the priests, politicians, police and film crews had left for Kingston, and only a relatively small group of Rastas and friends of Bob were sitting up on the hill, watching over the tomb. At seven o'clock, the Nigerian drummer Babatunde Olatunji walked around the tomb striking a Yoruba ceremonial bell called an *agogo*. Chiming out an African scale of bell syllables, Olatunji stopped at Bob Marley's head and sounded a loud clarion peal that seemed to linger for ever in the still mountain air of the St Ann night.

12 · AFTERMATH

Him sing a lotta LP for you and me/Him sing a lotta LP and forty-five/Me seh him nuh tek no bribe and him nuh build no strife/Oh Lord my God I wish him was alive . . . (from 'Sounds of Honourable Bob Marley' by Errol Scorcher)

In the aftermath of Bob's death his friends and those who loved the Wailers took stock and mourned him. While the Kingston DJs recorded their own rhyming tributes and Tuff Gong released a record called 'I Know' which had originally been recorded in 1975 for the *Rastaman Vibration* sessions, in New York Miles Davis played 'My Man's Gone' in concert as a memorial to Bob. For Marley devotees 'I Know', remixed by Family Man, sounded as spooky as if it had come from beyond the grave, but its message was reassuring: '*Ain't it good to know/ Jah will be waiting there.*' At the same time in New York Danny Sims released an album called *Chances Are*, containing re-recorded and remixed versions of songs Bob had cut between 1968 and 1972. Because the LP had a recent picture of Bob on its sleeve it was denounced as an exploitation, almost a fraud, and anathema to the spirit of Bob's music. 'I got worse reviews than Hitler,' Sims said. Later on in the summer, the fourth Reggae Sunsplash festival at Montego Bay was held as a tribute to Bob, with Stevie Wonder coming on at the climax of the show to jam with Rita Marley and the Wailers. The park was subsequently rededicated in memory of Bob.

Bob left behind a huge number of unissued songs, enough for five more albums according to some estimates. And then there were the hundreds of songs that evanesced into the night air. Diane Jobson remembers, 'One time it was raining at Hope Road, and we were sitting down on the front step. And Bob sitting with his guitar made a beautiful song. And then we never heard anything more about it. That particular one, I remember him making a remark, he said "All right

now, you see me a-sing, you should be writing down the words that I'm doing." I said, "True, Bob." I picked up the phone directory and turned to the back page and wrote the words of the song on it. He just did a verse and stopped. Two years later, I picked up the phone book and was marvelling at the lyric. It was so beautiful.'

After his death, many of Bob's friends began to think of him as a Christ figure.

Tyrone Downie: 'Bob was a little like Christ for me. Christ wasn't perfect. Christ fucked women. He swore. He did what we all did. He was studying the laws of nature, the laws of the universe. He wasn't trying to teach us to be good, cos life is not about being good. Life is about being yourself, being free. How could he know so much about society if he wasn't part of it. Look at Mary Magdalene. So Bob . . . when he was alive I wasn't sure; since he died, my perspective is that he is really *the* prophet. Because I was right there with him, I never considered him as Bob the prophet. I considered him as Bob my friend.'

Diane Jobson: 'Bob must be seen as a Christ figure, and his songs as a new Book of Psalms. There will be no more prophets, so his message *had* to reach the ends of the earth. Even Japan, even Italy, where Rome is. "This could be the first trumpet, might as well be the last." '

Danny Sims: 'I think Bob was a very mythical character. He was like Jesus Christ. Not to say that he *was*, but he was a saintly kind of figure.'

Cedella Booker: 'There was something about Bob's eyes; the magnet in them was so strong that sometimes you couldn't look full at him when he was staring at you. . . . He always maintained that he was just a farmer. If you took away his money, he wouldn't starve.'

As part of a film biography of Bob that Chris Blackwell was planning, Cedella and Tyrone were taken to the bottom of the Grand Canyon in Arizona where members of the Havasupai Indian tribe held Bob in veneration. They played his records all the time. Bob would have loved it. Cedella and Tyrone sang for the Havasupai, who in turn sang Bob's songs back to them.

Since Bob died intestate, all his considerable money and property went to Rita, causing some discontent within the Wailers organization and Bob's extended family, including the various girlfriends who had had his children. Rita was determined to consolidate Tuff Gong enterprises, but she had to do without the help of the person who knew Tuff Gong best. When Bob died, Diane Jobson resigned. She told Rita that her services as lawyer and adviser had been personal, to Bob only. The complexity and diversity of Bob's business affairs did not daunt Rita. It took her three days of haggling and a hundred per cent import duty to

get hold of a Mercedes Bob had ordered just before he died, while in Germany. It was a custom-made, gold-plated 500SL sedan costing about thirty thousand pounds, and having got the car off the docks at Kingston Rita let fourteen-year-old Ziggy bang it around the old compound at Hope Road.

Danny Sims still had his part of the Marley business. 'We had the two-point override,' he said, 'I had the publishing. So the only thing I didn't get part of was the tour money, and they didn't make any money on tour. The Wailers sold out everywhere, but Bob got robbed a lot. I'm not calling any names, but Bob Marley got robbed more, because he was bigger, than any act in the history of the business.'

Bob's music lived on; it was the music that was truly important, and it had a message for many people. For the religious, its appeal was obvious. Marxists heard in it a call to arms and rebellion. Black people could identify with everything Bob ever wrote, while his young white fans heard a message of universal love and brotherhood. Rita said, 'Bob was born rich, that was his quality. His richness was on the spiritual level, the gift of God. The inspiration that he had to give was His glory.'

For me and for many of Bob's Jamaican friends and family the last salute to Bob Marley did not come until 6 February 1982. From Mrs Rita Marley and family I had received an invitation embossed with two Lions of Judah requesting my presence at 'their Birthdate Anniversary of the Hon. Robert Nesta Marley OM, our beloved brother and friend'. It was to be held at Nine Miles at 5 pm that afternoon.

At nine in the morning the bright clear day began with JBC broadcasting a long tribute to Bob that had been produced by an FM station in California. The road out of Kingston was free of lorries at that time which made the climb over the mountains faster and less exhausting. Outside Spanish Town my rented Toyota was stopped by police for speeding; a Jamaican JP was holding roadside court and gave me a pink summons for a court appearance in Kingston the following week. Back on the road, I wondered what Bob would have done with it. His spirit told me to crumple the pink document of Babylon and throw it out of the window, which I did.

Further on, a stop at the famous roadside shanties near Moneague to buy thirst-quenching water coconut, buttered roast yam and salt fish, giant pineapples and papayas, exotic naseberries, blushy red apples and long strings of oranges and tangerines, the great bounty of the St Ann hills. Turning off the main road, I drove towards Brown's Town, deep in the heart of the garden parish. Cruising along inland ridges one can see the impossibly deep azure of the ocean on the other side of the hills.

The lanes are narrow and infrequently travelled except by flocks of goats and the inter-village vans that hurl passengers along with breakneck abandon. On the flat open stretches steel poles have been erected at intervals to try to cut down on illicit ganja missions flown in by Florida-based Cessnas and Beechcrafts and landed on these quiet roads. In St Ann, the land is heavenly and green. The ghostly great houses of the late sugar empire watch over the landscape from their promontories. A man carrying water gently sways as he ambles slowly onward.

Through the teeming market town of Brown's Town on a busy Saturday, a riot of dark stalls and bright fabric in primary colours, a sea of faces that recall Togo and Benin as much as the West Indies. A stop at a roadside shop for an ice-cold bottle of Ting, Jamaica's grapefruit soda, the best soft drink in the world. Standing in the shop, we watch reggae star Dennis Brown roar by with locks flying, at the wheel of his new VW van, heading towards the party at Nine Miles.

Suddenly the road turns to gravel and we're winding up a rutted track. Jamaicans of all ages are heading up to Marley's hamlet on foot, carrying food and radios. Some shout for rides as we pass, but we're full up.

At Nine Miles I park, walk up a little hill past vendors of curried goat, roots tea and sensemilla, and find a seat next to the soundboard in front of a stage erected across the lane from Bob Marley's birthplace and tomb.

The landscape consists of rolling green hills, whose granite outcrops are covered with people waiting for the show to begin. The afternoon is alternately radiant and grey as great cumuli roll in from the sea. The sun sets behind the big hill at the back of the stage, and from then on the proceedings are lit by a single powerful bulb

The crowd is mostly Jamaican, but with a lot of youngish tourists who have found their way inland from the north coast. People are building spliffs and waiting out the afternoon in good humour and expectation. In front of the stage is a sign that reads: 'NO FILMING BY ORDER OF MANAGEMENT.' The management here is strictly Rita Marley. Back at 56 Hope Road in Kingston, Rita is having a huge concrete wall built round the Tuff Gong studio compound, turning the one-time tropical mansion into a fortress. It seems that Mrs Marley wishes to both assert and assure her control.

Bob Marley's simple cement tomb has been covered by a little chapel, grey-roofed and sided (perhaps temporarily) with sheetrock. Light in the stained-glass windows flickers from the dozens of long candles and tapers that burn silently for the late reggae king. Outside, police stand

guard with shotguns slung casually over their shoulders. On the roof of the tomb, a solitary white dove is perched.

The audience is full of dreads basking in the deep blue twilight, calling to new arrivals: 'Sky is Clear!' 'Pardon me sir, would you give me a likkle sensemilla thing?' 'Just a likkle Junior Tucker?' Just as half a dozen dreads fire up their meticulously crafted spliffs, a uniformed colonel of the Jamaica Defence Force stalks through the crowd brandishing his swagger stick, making ostentatious sniffing noises, turning up his nose at the sweet aroma of St Ann's finest draw. The Rastas mock the colonel without mercy and dissolve into peals of derisive laughter as they puff happily away.

The view into the little hills from my seat is long, surrounded by Jamaican mountain jungle. Giant turkey buzzards swoop low over the crowd, perhaps drawn by the spicy scent of stewing goat and I-tal food. Vendors are selling oranges. 'See the orange man! Get your bloodclaat orange right here!'

The large painting of Bob holding his guitar that was displayed at his funeral is propped up against the stage together with blown-up sepia portraits of Marcus Garvey and Haile Selassie. Red, green and gold bunting drapes the stage.

At 4.30 the sound system is switched on. Lui Lepke sings 'Tribute To Bob Marley' on tape. '*Me wake up Monday morning on the eleventh of May/Me hear a news flash me seh around midday/And this was what the announcer say/That the great Bob Marley pass away/Said the great Bob Marley pass away/Seh Bob Marley was the king fe reggae/Me heard that him die inna Miami/And at his bedside was his family/His children and his wife Rita Marley/Me seh the whole world is in sympathy/Me seh me love Bob Marley/Jah mek me tell ya that we love Bob Marley. . . .*'

After various members of the new Wailers set up their instruments on stage, Rita Marley, dressed in red and sporting tennis shoes and a Tuff Gong eyeshade, appeared on stage. She welcomed the throng, announced the programme, and asked for good behaviour with all the propriety of the lady schoolteacher on the skank of 'One Draw'. Then she introduced her priest, a handsome Ethiopian from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church who walked onstage in a black burnouse and prayed, in heavily accented English, for the soul of Bob Marley. Then the priest held his small black cross aloft in the St Ann twilight and simply said, 'Our Father. . . .'

It was like a dub version of the Lord's Prayer.

As night fell, a white-smocked Ethiopian reggae band took the stage, but not before an intense Rastafarian woman announced that tape-recorders and cameras were 'dangerous diseases' and would be

confiscated if discovered. Around this time, small groups of hard youths in mirror sun-glasses and berets filtered through the guests, threatening the various professional photographers trying to cover the event.

Dallol was basically an Ethiopian copy band, and they covered Wailers songs like 'Who The Cap Fit' with little grace. They were followed by a Rasta dub poet who delivered a shining poetic invocation that set a sharp tone for the evening. As his staccato poetry jabbed into the audience he was greeted with appreciative cries of '*murder!*' and '*bim!*'

Then the new Wailers came on. Seeco was absent, apparently exiled for some transgression; Tyrone Downie was touring with Grace Jones; Al Anderson was up in New York. Carly and Family Man Barrett remained one of reggae's greatest rhythm sections, and Earl 'Wire' Lindo was on keyboards. Junior Marvin took Bob's lead vocals, sometimes singing in partial phrases, so the new Wailers sounded like the old Wailers in dub. Artman Neville Garrick was on percussion, and the band was filled out with veteran guitarist Gitzroy and Steven Stewart on keyboards. From their sound that night, it seemed that the Wailers were still trying to regain their automatic transmission while mourning their leader. Certainly, to almost everyone present, the old Wailers' drive was absent that night. But the musicians, obviously experimenting, still managed to mount a soulful and very satisfying tribute to Bob. Tuff Gong chanteuse Nadine Sutherland, not yet fourteen years old, came out first, and did quick versions of her single 'Starvation' and the last major Marley anthem, 'Redemption Songs'.

Then, a dramatic moment. The I Threes walked on.

Rita Marley, Judy Mowatt, Marcia Griffiths, the three reggae goddesses. Judy and Marcia wore scarves around their heads, long dresses and red, gold and green silk Wailers tour jackets. Onstage, the I Threes don't smile much. They just look . . . awesome.

'It feels like a *party*,' Rita exclaims. But it doesn't; it feels like something else. Rita tries to get the crowd to sing 'Happy Birthday' to Bob, but the people seem stunned, reminded again that Bob rests in that tomb over there with the candles and the incense. Rita tries again, but it's really not working. It feels like a wake.

But that's all right, too, and the I Threes, arguably the best harmony singers in Jamaica, deliver a short set that begins with a subdued but beautiful rendition of 'Nice Time', continues with an even more beautiful acapella harmony orgy on 'That's How Strong My Love Is', and finishes with a long scatting skank with the new Wailers on the theme: '*Some like it hot/Some like it cold/Some like it in the pot/Nine days*

old.' A simple rhyme, but that night in Nine Miles, it *burned.*

The I Threes stepped off to great cheering and 'Mother Booker' came on to sing. Cedella was regally robed in salmon-coloured silk and gold coptic crosses. Backed by hand-drummers, she improvised a chant based on Bob's last words to her in the Miami hospital, 'Mama, don't cry. I'll be all right.' It was an amazing performance, and by the end of it, she had the audience spellbound.

The night's entertainment was finished by her grandchildren, the Melody Makers, Bob's three children with Rita – Cedella, Ziggy and Stevie – and Sharon, the daughter Rita had before meeting Bob. The kids did juvenile versions of their father's stately songs, and I decided to leave, feeling overcome with the sentiment that of all people, *of all people*, why did Bob Marley have to go? He was so important to so many, one of the very few truly international people.

It was hard to keep my eyes on the undulating red dirt road, trying to find the way to Claremont and the main highway to Kingston. I kept thinking of how Bob Marley had emerged from these limestone hills and his grandfather's clan to become not only the key figure in reggae, but the most important and charismatic world champion of human freedom and dignity in the 1970s. The old road looped about itself as it threaded east through the hill country, and my eyes were wet from the red dust and all the emotion of the day.

At darkened Claremont we stopped at a roadside bar for a cold Red Stripe and a taste of the jukebox. Bob Marley was singing 'Could You Be Loved'. The night air smelled of ginger lily and sweet St Ann dew. A mile on down the road, we turned south for Kingston and home.

PICTURE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Bob Marley is the definitive biography of the key figure in reggae and the most important and charismatic artist to emerge as a champion of human freedom during the 1970s.

Robert Nesta Marley's life begins in 1945 in the hill country of St Ann in Jamaica, where he was born and brought up in the farming community of his grandfather's clan, and this book traces the story, little-known until now, of a childhood torn between two families and a brutal struggle for survival. When, in his teens, Bob Marley moved with his mother into the slums of western Kingston he teamed up with his neighbours Bunny Livingston and Peter Tosh to create the early harmonies that would later in the 1960s evolve into Bob Marley and the Wailers. After a decade of hard work, poverty, exploitation and personal transformation through Rastafarianism, Bob became an international reggae star. This book goes behind the scenes of the highlights of his career – the breakthrough in Europe and the States, his attempted assassination in 1976, the Peace Movement of 1978 and his involvement in Jamaican politics, the independence of Zimbabwe and the fatal illness that claimed his life in May 1981 – and details the extraordinary experiences that formed the dreadlocked figure revered by so many both during and after his lifetime.

Stephen Davis is a highly respected writer on contemporary music, and this biography completes a trilogy of books about Jamaica, the first two being *Reggae Bloodlines* and *Reggae International*. He has based his research for *Bob Marley* on personal interviews with Marley and his extended family, friends and musicians, as well as on hundreds of documentary items in archives in Jamaica, England and America. He is presently living in Blue Hills, Massachusetts.

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